

A sourcebook for
CHAMPIONS

VIBORA

BAY



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VIBORA[^] BAY

Vibora Bay

A Setting Book for *Champions*

Authors: Darren Watts, Derek Hiemforth,
Jason Walters, and Steven S. Long

Editing & Development: Steven S. Long

Layout & Graphic Design: Allen Thomas

Cover Illustration: Erich Von Hase

Cartography: Keith Curtis

Interior Illustration: Brett Barkley, Jefferson
Cram, Robert Cram, Conley Philpott, Erik
Radamaker, Chris Stevens, Derrick Thomas,
Erich Von Hase, Daniel Young

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction.....	4
Chapter One: A History Of Vibora Bay	
A History of Shadows	8
Colonization	8
War, Expansion, and Reconstruction...	10
Booms and Crashes: 1900-1937	12
The Golden Age Begins: 1938-1945..	14
Peace and Quiet: 1947-1960	14
Change Is Gonna Come:	
1961-1980.....	15
The Queen City: 1981	
to the Present	16
Chapter Two: The Lay Of The Land	
Gulf Breezes	18
Seasons.....	18
Elevation	19
Geology	19
Local Flora and Fauna	20
The San Sebastien Swamp	21
Around the City	23
Weston	23
High Street.....	25
Easton	26
The Suburbs and Nearby Cities.....	27
Suburbs.....	27
Nearby Cities.....	28
City Government.....	29
Organization.....	29
The Mayor	29
The Controller	29
The City Council	30
Other Notable City and County	
Officials	30
Chapter Three: A Day In The Life	
Life in Vibora Bay	32
Getting Around	33
Colleges and Universities	34
On the Scene: Vibora Bay's Media...	34
Television	34
Radio.....	35
Newspapers.....	35
On the Town	37
Sports.....	37
Highbrow Entertainment.....	38
Nightclubs and Bars	38

The Superhuman World.....	40
Black Mask X	40
Other Notable Features of the	
Superhuman World.....	43
The Mystic World	44
Dr. Ka.....	44
Lesser Mystics	48
The Business World	48
Shipping and Transportation	49
Industrial and Manufacturing	50
Oil, Chemicals, and Medical	
Technology	51
Legal and Financial Services	51
Agriculture and Aquaculture	51
Small Shops, Cafes, and Retail	
Stores	52
The Martial World	53
Vibora Carmesi.....	54
Redsnake.....	54
The Military World.....	57
USCG Vibora Bay	57
Naval Station Vibora Bay	58
Caffrey Air Force Base	58
The Religious World	58
The High Apostolic Church	58
Chapter Four: Cops And Robbers	
Law Enforcement.....	64
The Vibora Bay Police Department ..	64
Behind the Scenes	65
VBPd Organization	66
MARS Team	67
Vibora Bay's Prisons	68
Federal Law Enforcement.....	68
UNTIL.....	70
Superhuman Allies.....	72
Amphibian.....	72
Brother Thunder	75
Sister Rain	78
Juryrig	81
Vibora Bay's Underworld	85
Mundane Crime.....	85
The Sweetland Family.....	85
Clark Robinson.....	85
The Sovereign Sons.....	87
Other Street Gangs.....	87
Superhuman Crime.....	88
Costumed Criminals	89
Supercriminal Organizations.....	89

Chapter Five: Hot Spots For Cool Heroes

The Mahogany Club	92
Sterling Manor.....	93
Gabriel's Alley.....	95
The Sixth Chakra	95
The Crabtree Building	96
The White Hare Hotel	98
Sweetland's Restaurant.....	99
Marty's Place	100

Chapter Six: Gamemastering Vibora Bay

Gamemastering Vibora Bay	102
The Coming Storm.....	102
Robert Caliburn	103
Therakiel, the Halfway Angel.....	108
Vibora Bay Campaigns.....	110
The GM's Vault	111
Chapter One.....	111
Chapter Two	111
The San Sebastien Swamp and	
the Skunk Ape	111
The Skunk Ape	112
Chapter Three	115
Valerian Scarlet	115
Chapter Four	120
VIPER.....	124
The Warehouse	125
Monique Fontaine	126
Other Area Nests.....	129
VIPER Plot Seeds.....	130
DEMON.....	130
The Plantation	130
Whitman's Warehouse	132
Chapter Five.....	133
Villains	136
Cirque Sinister.....	136
Amnesia	137
Cauldron.....	139
Flow	142
Minimax.....	144
Bobby Holmes	146
Other Villains	148
Al, the Alligator Man.....	148
Deadman Walkin'	150
Mr. Gemini	152
 Bibliography	 154

INTRODUCTION



*"On a night in Vibora Bay
My baby fell in love with me
The sky was clear, the moon was bright
And the soft wind blew in from the sea..."*

—"On A Night In Vibora Bay," by Dale Turner. From the movie *Windswept* (1940), starring Jenny Blake and Harry Ames, Jr.

Love evenings in the summer, thought the blonde woman wearing leather and woven Kevlar. Late sunsets, warm breeze in off the bay. Not too humid. She paused on the roof of a Weston apartment building, momentarily noting the vertiginous view down the eight floors to the sidewalk, before taking a deep breath of the nighttime air. *Smells like rain, though. Bet a storm's coming...*

Her birth certificate says "Jennifer Ward," but that's not the only name she's known by. When she wrote midlist novels that straddled the genres of true crime, adventure, and horror, she was "Constance Hagen." When she wrote historical romances for a different publisher, she was "Priscilla Mayes." And most importantly, when she puts on her body armor and gear and takes to the rooftops of Vibora Bay in search of criminals to thwart and innocent lives to protect, she's the Black Mask. She moves between names with ease these days. Tonight she's been grappling with a particularly sticky plot point in her latest novel-in-progress, and took to the streets to clear her head.

She continued south down Second Avenue, leaping from roof to roof across the narrow alleys that occasionally separated the tall brick blocks. When she reached Bayshore Boulevard, she carefully aimed her linegun at the roof of the Ramada Inn across the street, the tallest building in the neighborhood. The line and hook contacted the masonry with a satisfying *chunk*. She tested the line with a practiced tug before leaping over the side toward the street, hitting the "Retract" button as she went. Before she fell more than a few feet, the powerful engine in the gun began coiling the line back in, sending her sailing towards the roof of the Ramada in a graceful, if wildly dangerous, arc. She hit the wall of the hotel as planned, several floors below the roof, and "ran" up the remaining feet between windows while the line continued to retract. A few seconds later she was comfortably jogging along the roof, eyes scanning the horizon to the south for signs of a summer squall coming in from the Gulf of Mexico.

A light — one out of place in a neighborhood she knows so well — caught her eyes. She stopped short, dropping into a squat and peering over the

side, down to the alleys in back of the commercial buildings on Bayshore. A small group of young men were watching one of their number working with a small blowtorch on the locked back door of a stereo and electronics shop. *What have we here?* she asked herself with a small smile. *Just what the doctor ordered. And to think some people waste their money on gym memberships....* She checked the equipment at her belt — taser, tear gas grenades, handcuffs, all secure. Taking aim with her linegun, and fixing a look of grim determination on her face that belied the song in her heart, she again leaped out into the night.

It's a good night to get some work done, thought the man in the upscale Easton luxury apartment as he swung a green cloak over his muscular bare shoulders. His name is Khalid, and once he was the Golden Child, raised by a cult that worshipped Set, the dark god of ancient Egypt. His earliest memories are of training in the mystic arts as he was prepared to serve at his father's right hand to bring about a new age of chaos and misery. But he was rescued when his uncle destroyed all of his father's works and showed Khalid there was another way.

Now he calls himself Dr. Ka. He has visited worlds beyond this one, and studied at the temples of gods and kings. Thoth himself taught him the art of separation, of dividing his spiritual body from his physical one. Though many of the beings he has met bear no particular ill will toward humanity, they all share a callousness and sense of superiority that irk him. They don't see the spark of the divine that all humans carry, that burns so brightly in Khalid's eye that he cannot turn away. Humanity has a glorious future, if allowed to pursue it, and Khalid has sworn to do everything in his considerable power to protect humans as they tread that path.

They, he thought to himself with a smile of amusement at his sudden self-awareness. *Of course, I meant to say we.* He looked out the window at the moon, hanging full and bright, low in the sky over the rooftops of Inner Easton. He relaxed, and his second self, his *ka*, slipped free of his physical form. Invisible and insubstantial, it passed through the window and soared into the sky. Khalid took a moment to adjust to seeing two views of the same building from two different angles, then banked his *ka* to the west and headed for High Street. *Of course, I meant to say we.*

It's a lovely night for a swim, he thought as he passed below the surface of the sea a mile from shore. The warm water of Vibora Bay gradually

yielded to the slightly cooler currents of the Gulf of Mexico as the well-muscled man with brown hair and a tight one-piece suit swam southeast at remarkable speed. His name is Geoff Lamb, although the world knows him better as the superhero Amphibian, former teen sidekick, environmental activist, and minor-league celebrity. People look at his costume and press clippings and think they know him pretty well. They don't know this side of him, though. He keeps this to himself.

He passed over the wreck of an old naval mine sweeper from sixty years ago, now encrusted with coral and anemones. It's home to hundreds of different fish, including a particularly old and testy nurse shark. Geoff gave it a wide berth — he doesn't fear the shark, but he'd rather not provoke it on such a lovely night. The fish that acknowledged him as he swam sent him warm thoughts of friendliness, which he returned with a smile and jaunty little wave. They didn't recognize the gesture, but they got the meaning.

When life on the surface gets depressing, or tiring, or just boring, he comes out here. The quiet of being a hundred feet down, in the cool and dark, holds enormous appeal. He wishes more people understood the charm of *quiet* — the small background rush of currents and bubbles so much more soothing and less intrusive than the traffic of the city. The world up there doesn't give the world down here a second thought, usually... unless it's looking for a place to dump its garbage or casting purse-seine nets to haphazardly grab entire schools of fish (and whatever else it might catch by accident) to feed peoples' faces.

The world up there has no idea how tempted he is sometimes to simply head out into the open ocean and never come back. But he never does. He doesn't belong there either, not really, not any more than he belongs on the surface. He doesn't belong anywhere, unless it's on the border of these two worlds. With a sigh, he turned and headed back to shore.

It's a beautiful night, thank the Bondye, thought Brigitte Sabatiere as she lit another candle in the peristyle behind her small office. By day she works for the Pierre Street Community Center, processing forms and helping residents with paperwork for things like taxes and citizenship applications. But in the evenings she tends to the neighborhood's spiritual needs in the Pierre Street Hounfort. There, they call her Sister Rain.

A tall black man wearing a blue jacket covered in sequins, a top hat, and an oversized white flower in his lapel entered. Upon seeing Brigitte he executed a deep bow, sweeping his hat near the floor before spinning around and rolling it back up his arm onto his head. "How are you, m'dear?" he asked.

She smiled. Despite everything they'd been through, she deeply loved this crazy man, even though they learned a long time ago they were a disaster as a couple. "Tired, but okay. Isn't it gorgeous out tonight? Warm, maybe a little rain later."

"Indeedy, though not as gorgeous as you." He kissed her hand, then wandered over to the altar

near the doorway. He ducked his head to avoid the wooden sailing ship hanging by strings from the ceiling, a symbol of the *loa* Erzulie. "What's on de menu tonight?"

"Mrs. Sanchez. She still thinks Hattie Gambo put a curse on her, called in some *petro loa*. She's probably imagining it, but just in case, I promised to do a ceremony for her." Brigitte lit another candle.

"Better safe den sorry, eh? Don't blame ya. Even little curses got a way of getting outta hand in *dis* city. Lemme know if'n I can help." He brandished his baton, as though fighting an invisible opponent.

"I will, thanks." Brigitte lit the final candle and blew out the long match. *Better safe than sorry? Indeedy is right.*

It's been a long day, thank God it's over, thought Damon Armstrong. He'd pulled an extra shift at the electronics store, helping frat boys get their "totally radical" stereo systems up and running again after they spilled beer in the speakers. He tossed his wallet and keys by the phone in his tiny apartment, grabbed a cola from the fridge, and walked out to the garage.

"Hey boss!" Augie, the teen who occasionally helped him tinker, and the only one who knew Damon's secret, appeared at the garage window. "What're we doing tonight?"

"Sorry, Augie, got other plans. VIPER's up to something. I got some info over that bug I slipped in their aircycle last week — the agent who was using it's been sent out into the swamps for something." Damon pulled on a padded jumpsuit over his t-shirt and jeans and zipped it up tight. "You wanna stick around here and get some work done, it's fine by me. I'll be home later."

He let Augie in, and the slightly tubby kid tossed his books and homework on the workbench. Damon reached for his helmet and slid it on. He thumbed a couple of buttons on his glove, and suddenly Augie stood out in infrared. "Systems are green. Hand me the jetpack, will ya?"

Augie passed him what seemed to be a cross between a mountain-climber's backpack and a vacuum cleaner. Damon slipped it onto his back and slid down the one-handed control lever. "All right, bud. You get your homework done, and I'll be back before you know it, okay?"

Augie gave him the thumb's-up. "Kick some snakeboy butt."

"You know it," says Juryrig. He took two steps outside, pressed the button activating his rockets, and launched himself into the nighttime sky.

It was a quiet night in the city, but the San Sebastien Swamp to the north teemed with the sounds of life. Frogs croaked, crickets chirped, owls hooted, and occasionally there was even the low growl of a hunting bobcat or panther. Out here a thousand stars lit the night and erased the city's illumination from the sky.

But tonight there's also light of a different kind. A small group of men, each wearing a jumpsuit of green and gold displaying patches with snake symbols on them, struggled to hoist a heavy device out

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHORS

Vibora Bay is, of course, a completely fictional addition to the Champions Universe. The real stretch of the Florida Panhandle where we've located it has no bay, and is instead a lovely if flat collection of beaches. Several of the suburbs and towns we mention are in fact real, though their histories, physical descriptions, and usually sizes are changed to reflect the presence of an enormous city in their midst. Attempting to use this book as a real travel guide to the central Florida Panhandle will, alas, likely be an utter failure... though you'll probably still enjoy the beaches.

of the back of a boat that had been pulled up onto the bank of a small stream. While two of the men held lanterns, the others worked on the device with strange tools and muttered to themselves.

"Will you hurry up? This place gives me the creeps!" said one of the lantern-holding men.

"What's the problem, Murphy? Scared the Skunk Ape'll get ya?" smirked the other.

"Bite me. There's all kinds of nasty stuff out here, man. Panthers, snakes, quicksand. I ain't stupid. Let's get the damn thing set up and get out of here."

"Just be a few more minutes. Gotta calibrate with the satellite," said one of the kneeling men as he punched commands into the device's keypad.

Watching them impassively from outside the range of the lanterns, an enormous, ponderous figure slowly blinked "eyes" sculpted from the decaying matter of plants and muddy bogs, and waited to see what the men would do next.

"I'm telling you, I feel like we're being watched," said Murphy, and his compatriots laughed again. He was right, of course — they were being watched by millions of eyes and antennae and feelers and branches twisting slowly in the evening breeze. *Everything* is being watched. Slowly and carefully, the Swamp decides what to do....

There he goes again, thought the man in the alley as he watched Dr. Ka's invisible second self fly past above. He could barely be seen in the shadows; only the glowing ember at the tip of the lit cigarette in his mouth revealed his presence. Anyone who spotted him would figure him for a bum — Army fatigue jacket, faded jeans, dirty boots, a day's growth of beard. If they knew about the gun and knife he had under the jacket, they'd take him for a mugger instead. But if Ka saw him down there, he'd wonder what was happening tonight to bring the Magnum Mage to that part of Vibora Bay.

Suddenly there was a soft flutter of bat-like wings and a *thing* landed on his shoulder — a dragon, it seemed, but the size of a housecat. "Do you *mind*?" the man asked as claws bit into his shoulder. A sarcastic little puff of smoke in the face and what might be a draconic grin was all the answer he got.

He turned his Third Eye skyward again and watched as Dr. Ka flew off into the distance. *Better keep your wits about you, Doc*, he thought to himself. *There's more goin' on in this city than even old Ibis-Head could know....*

WELCOME TO THE QUEEN CITY...

...we hope you enjoy your visit!

Vibora Bay is the third of Hero Games's setting books detailing the amazing world of the Champions Universe, where superheroes battle a panoply of evil to keep the world safe and secure, and menaces both mundane and mystic threaten Human-

ity on a regular basis. Unlike Millennium City (detailed in the book of the same name), which embodies many of the latest technological advances and does its best to live up to its nickname of "the City of the Future," Vibora Bay is a place that partakes as much of days gone by as the days to come. It is a City of Shadows, where more than a few old traditions still hold sway, and strange beings may lurk in the alleys and swamps, on the lookout for unwary prey....

Chapter One, *The Queen City*, discusses the history of Vibora Bay and the surrounding region. Beginning with prehistoric times and advancing all the way into the twenty-first century, it describes how the tides of time have washed over Vibora Bay — sometimes changing it, sometimes breaking on the rocks of custom and tradition.

Chapter Two, *The Lay Of The Land*, describes the geography and climate of Vibora Bay. It also discusses the layout of the city itself — its neighborhoods, districts, and streets — as well as the city government.

Chapter Three, *A Day In The Life*, reviews what life is like in Vibora Bay: the daily grind; major annual events; media and cultural attractions; the city's subcultures (including the notorious High Apostolic Church). It also describes three of the city's best-known superheroes — Black Mask X, Dr. Ka, and Redsnake.

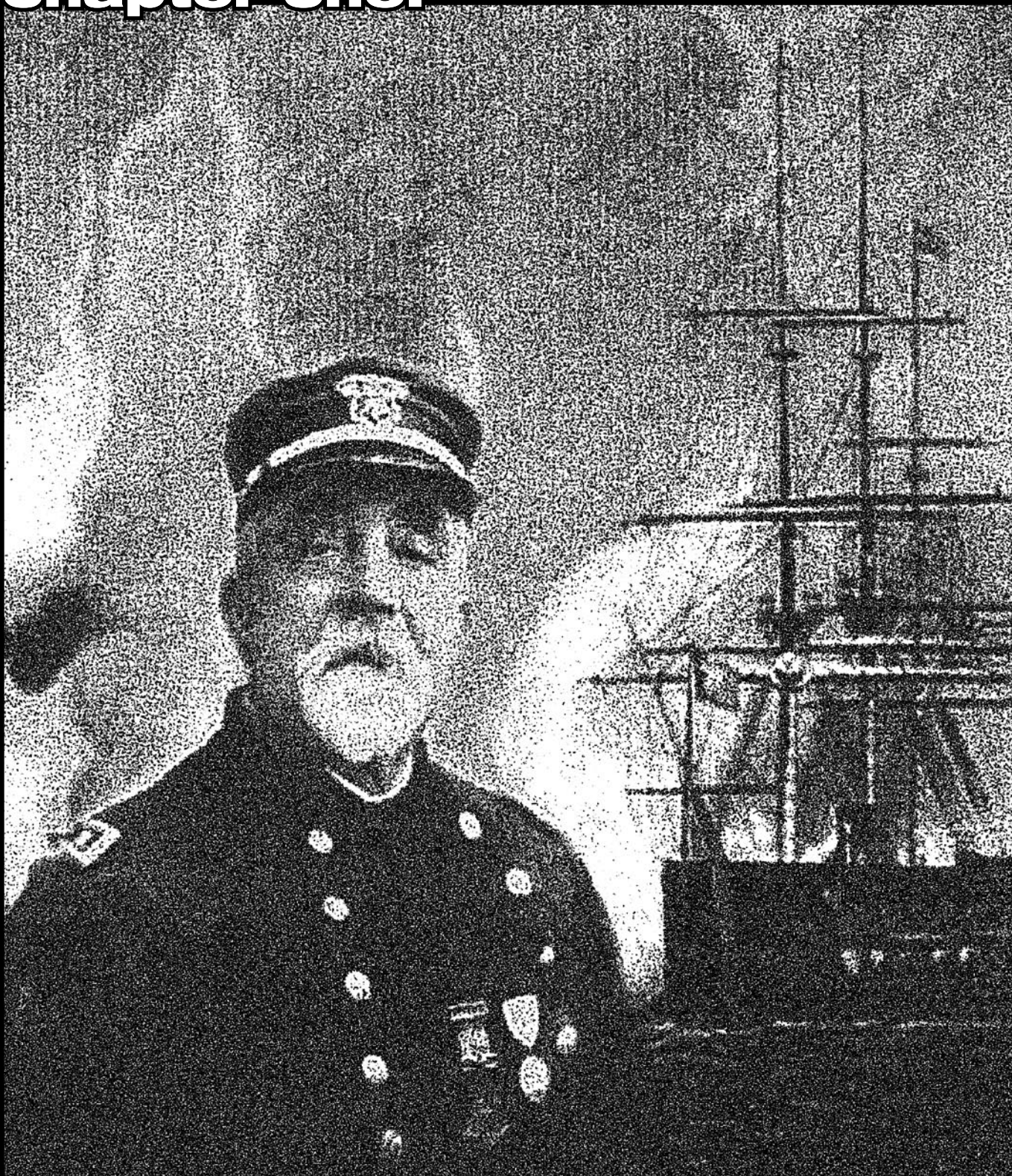
Chapter Four, *Cops And Robbers*, describes what law enforcement is like in Vibora Bay. The VBPD is a force of dedicated peace officers trying to hold the line against not only regular criminals, but some decidedly stranger threats to public safety. They have the help of federal agencies (such as the FBI), as well as some organizations and superheroes they're not entirely aware of. The second part of the chapter reviews their opposite number: the denizens of the Vibora Bay underworld, such as the Sweetland family, the Big Picture, VIPER, and more. At the end of this chapter you'll find character sheets for a few more heroes — Amphibian, Sister Rain and Brother Thunder, and Juryrig.

Chapter Five, *Hot Spots For Cool Heroes*, presents eight significant Queen City locations that are likely to appear in your Vibora Bay adventures: the Mahogany Club; Sterling Manor; Gabriel's Alley; the Sixth Chakra; the Crabtree Building; the White Hare Hotel; Sweetland's Restaurant; and Marty's Place. Some of them are elegant and upscale, others dark and dangerous — but they're all interesting.

The concluding chapter of the book is for the GM's eyes only. In addition to the secret history of the area, and general advice about GMing games set in Vibora Bay, it contains the GM's Vault — the truth about what's going on in Vibora Bay that only the GM should know. In addition to many plot seeds, the GM can also find character sheets for several villains in this chapter, including Valerian Scarlet, the Cirque Sinister, Deadman Walkin', and the infamous Skunk Ape.

So get ready... it's time to hit the shadowy streets of Vibora Bay in search of adventure!

chapter one:



THE QUEEN CITY A HISTORY OF VIBORA BAY

A HISTORY OF SHADOWS



VIBORA BAY'S HISTORICAL POPULATION

Here's the approximate population of Vibora Bay at different points during its history:

1687:	Founding, approximately 150
1710:	500
1750:	1,000
1780:	2,000
1800:	1,200
1820:	3,500
1840:	8,000
1860:	9,000
1880:	18,000
1900:	33,000
1920:	56,000
1940:	105,000
1960:	280,000
1980:	540,000
2000:	810,000

Vibora Bay seems to be an historical anomaly. According to current theories, Florida was first settled approximately 12,000 years ago by prehistoric tribesmen who worked their way south for thousands of years after crossing over the Bering Strait from Asia. But no evidence exists of any permanent settlements on the shoreline, or even within a few miles of the Bay, until the arrival of European settlers in the sixteenth century. There certainly were plenty of native settlements *around* the area — archaeologists have found remnants of middens and mounds of snail and oyster shells at sites within ten miles of the Bay both to the east and west. But despite the shallow, warm waters and apparent abundance of seafood, the natives apparently chose not to live there, at least not permanently. Why this is remains a mystery, as local tribes kept no written records and the oral traditions have either been lost or are of questionable authenticity. Various Creek legends refer to the place as the (or perhaps simply *an*) abode of the gods, where people were forbidden to live, while others talk of monsters in the swamps and sea that made the area too dangerous. Geologists have speculated about landslides, sinkholes, and changes in local sea level that may have left the entire current shoreline under several feet of water. Archaeologists and anthropologists continue to debate the issue today, but it seems unlikely the matter will ever be resolved to anyone's satisfaction.

THE EXPLORERS ARRIVE

Florida itself was first discovered by the Spanish in April of 1513, when Juan Ponce de Leon landed somewhere near present-day St. Augustine. Since it was near the Spanish eastertime holiday of *Pasqua florida*, the “feast of flowers,” he named the land Florida. News quickly spread back to Europe of his discovery and the rich potential of the land there. It's uncertain who exactly were the first whites in Vibora Bay itself. Hernando de Soto and his party certainly came through the general area while searching for Indian treasure between 1539 and his death in 1542, but what records exist of his travels don't mention anything matching the description of Vibora Bay.

Other expeditions also passed nearby, but the first confirmed mention of the Bay itself is in the records of the expedition of Don Tristan de Luna y Arellano, who was sent by the Viceroy of Mexico to start colonies along the coast of the Gulf of Mexico in 1559. His party of 500 soldiers, over a thousand civilians and servants, and 240 horses landed at Pensacola Bay in August of that year. Then a hurricane destroyed all but three of his ships. After

establishing a camp, he sent out exploratory parties. One stopped in Vibora Bay for several days, and apparently considered it a good site for a colony... at least until an outbreak of illness and a plague of snakes caused the explorers to abandon the idea. These problems eventually caused Arellano's soldiers to rebel and the entire expedition to fail, and Arellano was sent to Spain in 1561 to give an account of his failure to the King. His misadventures had left him both destitute and an invalid. He returned to Mexico in 1567, where he died a few years later.

In 1585 a group of French Protestants fleeing religious persecution in their homeland founded a small settlement at what is now Goldenrod Beach overlooking the Bay. Approximately 100 strong, they built a small collection of houses and a single church, and established friendly relations with the local Creek Indians. A Spanish force utterly destroyed the village in 1590, leaving only a handful of survivors who fled to Tallahassee.

COLONIZATION

Spanish control over Florida and the rest of what is now the southeastern United States remained effectively unchallenged through the end of the sixteenth century. But by the mid-1600s both France and England had established successful colonies to the north and were eyeing Spanish territory hungrily.

Vibora Bay itself was permanently settled by the Spanish in 1687, when a group of colonists and soldiers led by Don Juan de Orozco put ashore at what is now the Weston Shore Fish Market, where he built a small fort, a church, and several homes. (The first church burned down in 1699, but a second, El Mission de San Paolo, replaced it in 1702 and still stands today.) Fort Orozco quickly became one of the way stations near the larger settlement of Pensacola some fifty miles east, which was permanently settled in 1698.

Though Orozco was the original leader of the settlers, once the fort and town had been established he had little interest in settling down. He continued his explorations east, returning only rarely. The first mayor of Vibora Bay was Jaime Pilar, and he quickly learned how difficult it would be to maintain a thriving colony in the area despite the absence of indigenous peoples within twenty miles. In the first several years colonists were lost to sharks, pumas, quicksand, the occasional poisonous plant, lightning strikes, and of course the ubiquitous snakes that gave the bay and colony their names. But the harbor, which was shallow

and easily defensible, and the strategic importance of Pensacola and the Gulf itself meant the colony received regular reinforcements. Despite all of the hardships the little colony thrived. It became a badge of honor among the local soldiers to say that one had served at Fort Orozco and survived.

The hazardous natural elements were not the only threat to the small town, of course. The English and French had plans for Florida. Both allied themselves to various degrees with the local Creek Indians, who already had no love for the Spanish after their encounters around St. Augustine. Throughout the first decades of the eighteenth century Vibora Bay remained a small village surrounding Fort Orozco, where farmers worked what they could from the land and local missionaries attempted the “good work” of converting the Creeks to Christianity. Pilar died of an unknown tropical disease in 1715, and Fra. Mariano Lisuen, head of the Mission San Paolo, took over the duties of Mayor.

CHANGING HANDS

In 1719, French soldiers stormed and took the city of Pensacola, and many Spanish soldiers and their families retreated to Vibora Bay and other small towns to prepare their counterattack. Fortunately, back home France and Spain had formed an alliance against the British, who were drawing many resources from its colonies. As part of the agreement the French withdrew from Pensacola after only a few months. Several of the Spanish soldiers chose to stay in Vibora Bay, however, and with their arrival the soldiers of Fort Orozco once again held the majority of the town’s attention. The efforts of the Mission San Paolo gradually faded over the succeeding decades, and by the 1740s the staff of the Mission was only maintaining the church itself and no longer sponsoring efforts to convert the Creeks. The Creeks, for their part, were glad to avoid missionary attention and resumed regular trade with the local fishermen and farmers.

In 1763 the British won the entire territory of Florida from Spain as part of the spoils of the Seven Years’ War and the resulting First Treaty of Paris. Many Spaniards fled Vibora Bay for Louisiana, Texas, and Mexico, and the British army seized Fort Orozco and renamed it Fort Blenkhorn after the new military commander, Colonel Kevin Blenkhorn. While about 700 British colonists moved into the nicer homes near the beach, at the same time hundreds of Seminoles (Indians, primarily of Creek descent but from multiple tribes that had been decimated by earlier conflicts with the Spanish) also came to the city, seeking work in the fields and homes of the British officers. The British also increased the use of the “peculiar institution” of slavery, importing blacks from Africa to work in the fields and farms. Blackman’s Square, now a tourist attraction in Weston, was set up as a slave trading block serving the entire area from Vibora Bay to Pensacola.

The new British town leaders immediately began pushing the northern boundary of the city farther into the swamps, creating High Street



as the main thoroughfare through the center of town. Efforts to expand farther north were continually thwarted — the chokingly-thick vegetation and damp soil of the swamplands made building permanent structures nearly impossible. Instead, the city continued to grow east and west, eventually spreading out to cover the entire inner coast of the bay.

Despite all of this industry, the British government showed little interest in the colony, and without regular reinforcements the population began to decrease. In 1770 farmer Henry Cluet, who had experienced a fair amount of financial success growing sweet onions, sugar cane, and bamboo and shipping them along the Gulf Coast, was elected mayor. A cruel and capricious man, he treated his slaves badly and the free citizens of “his” town little better. In 1778 a rebellion arose among the Seminoles working his property, and they hung Cluet from the branch of a nearby bald cypress. Not one of the free men of the city came to his aid during the uprising, and his home and surrounding buildings were burned to the ground. Peter Esher, who had come to the colony with his family as a young teen in 1764, became the new mayor. He was well-liked for his efforts to restore order and make peace with the Seminoles, but he was generally a retiring man who preferred peaceful farming to growth and expansion, and the town followed his lead.

THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR

Florida remained avidly Loyalist during the American Revolution, and Vibora Bay was no exception. Many Loyalist families moved to northern Florida in the months immediately following America’s independence. In 1781, Spanish forces retook the Western Florida Panhandle, with Pensacola falling after a fierce assault. The Spaniards captured Vibora Bay almost as an afterthought — without Cluet’s iron hand, the town had become little more than a village with a few outlying farms and a fort that had fallen into disrepair. The British ceded the entire territory of Florida back to the Spanish after the Second Treaty of Paris ended the American Revolution in 1783. Once again the population of the city turned over, as the remaining British farmers moved out (often to various Caribbean islands) rather than live under Spanish rule.

In their place came American settlers attracted by the offer of cheap land grants from the Spanish government (which had few forces it could commit to the defense of the peninsula should hostilities break out again). Joining them were several dozen escaped black slaves from Georgia and the Carolinas, who formed a small colony of their own near present-day Seagrove Beach. This colony soon merged with the city proper, which began to flourish as a trading center between Pensacola and St. Augustine, forming the foundation of what would eventually become Weston. Somehow, the presence of free blacks (though ones who worked at back-breaking labor for very little money) next to slave-owning households generated few social problems; freed slaves often moved over to Weston to work for themselves.

WAR, EXPANSION, AND RECONSTRUCTION

The first few years of the nineteenth century were peaceful and fairly prosperous for the town of Vibora Bay. The unusual mix of Spanish soldiers, American settlers, Seminole farmers, and former slaves worked together surprisingly well, and various ships from the Spanish Navy periodically docked in the harbor for shore leave. But to the north the Americans were feeling expansionist. In 1800 Spain surrendered the Louisiana Territory to Napoleon, who promptly sold it to the United States. Now comfortably in control of the Mississippi River and the city of New Orleans, the United States began to look hungrily at West Florida as well.

Andrew Jackson and his army of Indian hunters brought the Indian wars to Alabama in 1814, massacring the Creeks at Horseshoe Bend and driving them into retreat. Jackson and 5,000 soldiers pursued the Creeks into Northern Florida, burning Seminole villages as he went (and harassing any Spanish soldiers or farmers he came across as well). The Spanish, who had correctly predicted that they’d be unable to defend Florida against a direct attack, began to negotiate a timely retreat.

In 1821 the United States and Spain signed the Adams-Onís Treaty, which defined the boundaries between Spanish and American territories in the New World, leaving Texas, California, and New Mexico to Spain while formally ceding Florida and Oregon to the United States for \$5 million in assumed debt. The United States named Jackson the new Governor of Florida and selected Tallahassee as the new capitol (a geographical compromise, since it’s midway between Pensacola and St. Augustine).

INDIAN CONFLICTS

Jackson was elected President in 1828, and under his orders the wars against the Seminoles and other American Indians were stepped up. The Treaty of Payne’s Landing (1832), which provided for the Seminoles of Florida to move west into reservations, was signed by some tribes but not recognized by others, and by 1835 the United States had sent in troops under the command of General Zachary Taylor to deal with the recalcitrant natives. Vibora Bay was one of the landing sites for incoming troops and served as a supply depot for Indian fighters.

The Second Seminole War (since Jackson’s original attack was the First) lasted until 1840, with the Seminole chief Osceola engaging in guerrilla-style attacks against the much better armed and equipped American forces. Osceola had some impressive early victories, including an ambush and slaughter of Major Francis Dade’s two companies of troops in 1835, the story of which was used to motivate public sentiment against the “savages.” Osceola was captured in 1837, and with the aid of Alabama Creek Indians hired to combat the Seminoles on their own swampy turf, the Second

Seminole War ended with thousands of Seminoles dead and just as many more driven west of the Mississippi. But despite the Americans' declaration of victory, they had not done a very thorough job — swamps throughout northern and central Florida still hid small tribes of rebellious Indians. A Third Seminole War took place between 1855 and 1858, which ended when Chief Billy Bowlegs was paid to migrate to Oklahoma along with several hundred of his remaining followers. Hundreds more Seminoles still refused to leave, retreating south into the Everglades (where some of their descendants claim to still formally be at war with the United States today). Others took up residence in the swamps near Vibora Bay, eventually becoming part of the city.

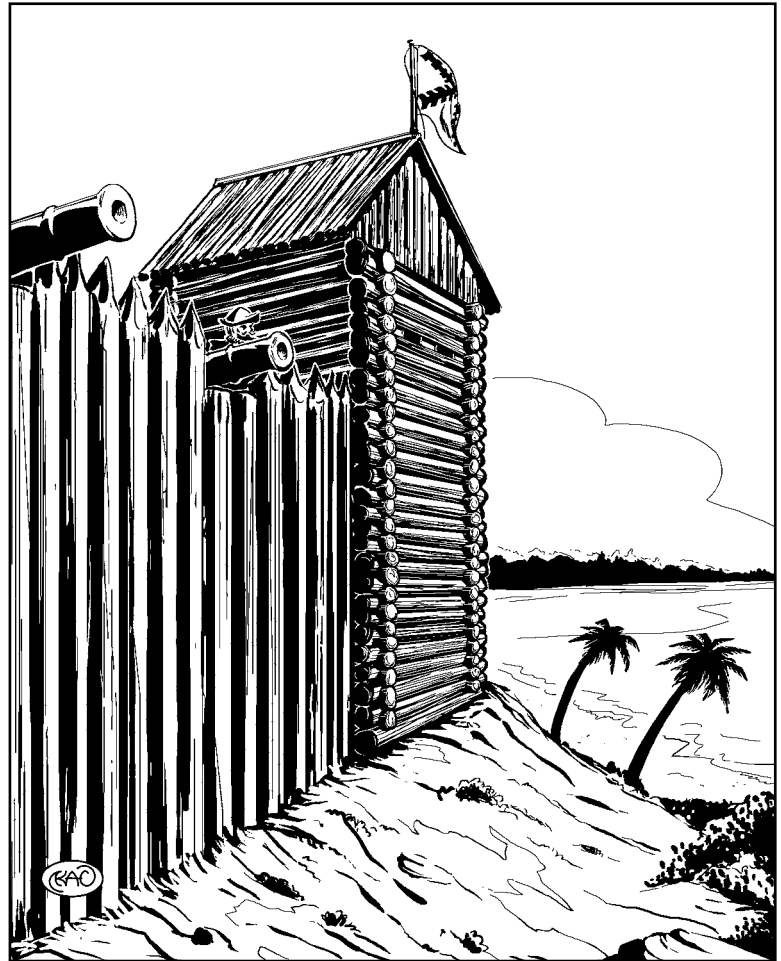
THE CIVIL WAR

On March 3, 1845, Florida became the twenty-seventh State of the Union. Officially, Florida was a slave-owning state, which made the escaped slaves living in Weston a bit of a sticky situation for Vibora Bay. Mayor John Oldcorne publicly defended the blacks of his city, saying they had earned their freedom and continued to do necessary and valuable work. Since the city was developing into a bustling center of trade and shipping, and local black laborers were absolutely necessary to the city's continued growth, the authorities wisely left the blacks alone.

Florida joined the rest of the southern States in seceding from the Union in 1861 and forming the Confederacy. Though of mixed feelings themselves about the institution of slavery, Floridians were also concerned about the growing industrialization of the North and the likelihood of tariffs on their exports to Europe. State troops were sent to hold Fort Barrancas in Pensacola, which became the military headquarters for the entire region.

In the early days of the war, Florida did quite well for itself, and Vibora Bay was no exception. With so much of their farmland currently devoted to cotton and other non-edible crops, the Confederate states required a great deal of food for their armies, and Florida's cattle and citrus industries experienced boom times. Vibora Bay was one of the centers of shipping supplies of vegetables, fish, and beef to soldiers all along the Mississippi River and the Atlantic Seaboard, and Delphinus Shipping Lines (founded a few years prior) became one of the city's largest employers.

The Union was swift to recognize Florida's strategic importance and began blockading shipping in and out of the Gulf of Mexico. It was during this period that Captain Rafael Semmes made his fame as a blockade runner and smuggler, providing much-needed supplies to the city in exchange for cargoes he could carry stealthily up the Atlantic coast. Vibora Bay continued to weather the war relatively unscathed... until the arrival of Major Roderick Burnham and his forces in September, 1864. Having split off from General Sherman's forces as they attacked Georgia, Burnham's men set up camp on the shore of the Choctawhatchee Bay and began a weeks-long campaign of shelling, followed by a



pair of destructive raids that burned down nearly every building the shells had left standing. In October Burnham turned his forces north, rejoining Sherman as he marched to Tennessee.

RECONSTRUCTION

The surviving citizens of Vibora Bay began to rebuild their city. There was little but rubble left to work with, but they erected new buildings, many of which still stand today. A lot of the work of reconstruction was overseen by young architect William Hand, whose unique and grandiose sense of style not only determined how the city would look after the war but has influenced builders and designers ever since. Hand's famous style includes lots of statuary, and human figures carved into the frames, facades, and cornices of buildings, as well as undersized windows that maximized the amount of bare wall on large buildings, which were painted in pastel shades.

The city was gradually rebuilt over the decades following the war, since its usefulness as a shipping center was too great to be ignored. By the mid-1880s Vibora Bay had regained its place among the leading cities of the South. The mayor at the time, Hal Bailey, was extremely popular both for his steady hand guiding the growth of the city and the lavish parties held at his home on Duval Street.

The burgeoning growth of the city nearly came to an end in 1889 when an epidemic of yellow fever ravaged the population. A panic swept the city and hundreds died, but a concerted effort organized



by Bailey to isolate the infected in special housing in the San Sebastien Swamp finally muted the epidemic. In response to the disaster, Florida created the State Board of Health to help avoid future outbreaks through monitoring and education.

In 1892, entrepreneur Kurt Fritch built a small railroad terminal (now known as Union Station) whose only line connected to Henry Flagler's Florida East Coast Railway. Flagler, who had built a large hotel in St. Augustine, recognized the need for regular train service in the area to help promote his city to wealthy Easterners. His incessant promotions spurred the creation of resorts throughout Florida as the state became a vacation destination for the rich and famous from all across the Eastern Seaboard. Vibora Bay immediately began to benefit from the arrival of wealthy tourists, as the small towns of Seagrove and Rosemary Beach built exclusive resorts. The following year the city's first high-end hotel, the Lindsley Arms, was built by John Lindsley, and immediately became a success (though locals continued to prefer the more "colorful" White Hare, which had been open since before the Civil War).

BOOMS AND CRASHES: 1900-1937

Vibora Bay grew quickly in the early years of the twentieth century as the East Side Seaport became a major freight terminus connecting to the bigger rail lines. Advances in rail travel meant the major cities of the North could now get oranges and lemons from Florida less than a week after they were

picked, and their insatiable demand for products like these (as well as tobacco, phosphates, and sugar) kept Union Station and the surrounding import/export businesses growing steadily. As more Americans bought automobiles, Florida in general and Vibora Bay in particular was seen as a vacation destination for "common folk" as well as the well-to-do.

With the outbreak of the first World War, Florida became even richer. Its excellent weather made it an ideal training base for all of the branches of the military, and the Navy built a new base on Choctawhatchee Bay. Florida's farms and groves were now also providing food for soldiers overseas, much of which was shipped from Vibora Bay.

With all of this influx of business, travelers, and wealth, it's perhaps not surprising that land speculation began to spiral out of control. Investors sold and re-sold every parcel of land in the state they could find at increasingly inflated prices, and still had no shortage of buyers. It wasn't long before organized crime took notice of Florida as a place for its own particular brand of business.

THE PULP ERA

During Prohibition, Vibora Bay became a haven for smugglers of rum and other alcohol from Cuba and Puerto Rico. At the same time, the notorious Buoniconte family of the Mafia (which was based in New York City but was expanding southward down the East Coast) sent Flavio Bondi, Don Giuseppe Buoniconte's cousin, to Vibora Bay to run the local rackets. Bondi's forces quickly overwhelmed the small local gangs as well as the undermanned and underpaid police force, and soon the Bondi Mob held the city in its grip. Though many individual policemen remained uncorrupted and

put forth their best efforts, the commissioner, chiefs, and precinct captains usually were receiving bribes from the Bondis to turn a blind eye to their activities. Throughout the late Teens and early Twenties, Vibora Bay remained an excellent place to make one's fortune, lawfully or not.

Florida's boom times crashed as quickly as they arrived, however. In the summer of 1926 a major hurricane hit South Florida, killing over four hundred people and doing millions of dollars in

damage. Several smaller but also devastating storms followed in quick succession, including one in 1928 that struck Lake Okeechobee, leading to intense flooding that killed 1,500. Many land speculators decided Florida was no longer the cash cow they thought it would be. The land boom disintegrated, the economy plummeted, and banks closed. The stock market crash of 1929 and the Great Depression hit the weakened state particularly hard, and many partly-completed construction projects were

MAX PENDRAGON

10 STR	21 DEX	13 CON
10 BODY	15 INT	18 EGO
20 PRE	20 COM	
6 PD	5 ED	4 SPD
6 REC	26 END	24 STUN

Abilities: 30-point VPP (only for assorted "minor magics," illusions, and the like); Combat Luck; Simulate Death; Acrobatics 13-; Acting 14-; Concealment 15-; Contortionist 18-; Conversation 13-; Criminology 12-; Disguise 16-; Gambling 12-; High Society 13-; KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 12-; KS: History Of Magic 12-; AK: Florida 12-; AK: World 12-; English (completely fluent); French (completely fluent); Armenian (native); Lockpicking 17-; Oratory 17-; Power (Magic) 15-; PS: Stage Magician 19-; Riding 13-; Security Systems 13-; Shadowing 13-; Sleight Of Hand 20-; Stealth 14-; 20 points of assorted interesting Contacts; Perk: Wealthy

Disadvantages: Hunteds (Dr. Fang and the Legion of Crime); Psychological Limitation: Can't Resist A Mystery; Psychological Limitation: Gentleman's Code; Social Limitation: Public Identity

Notes: The first "costumed hero" in the Vibora Bay area was probably Max Pendragon, the crusading "occult detective" who actually lived in St. Augustine but spent a fair amount of time in the Queen City as well. Born Stepan Bagdasarian to Armenian immigrant parents in Missouri in 1899, Pendragon joined a local circus as a teen and traveled across the south with several different carnivals, doing odd jobs and learning con games and stagecraft from various performers while primarily supporting himself as a pickpocket. In 1914 he attempted to rob the trailer of the mysterious psychic known only as the Great Baldini and was caught... but Baldini apparently recognized the potential for greatness in the brash young child and taught him both the arts of stage magic and not a little about real magic as well. By the 1920s, Max Pendragon had become the toast of Florida and Georgia. He also traveled across the world performing for adoring crowds and heads of state, while opposing the efforts of villains like Dr. Fang and the Legion of Crime.

Though Pendragon never actually lived in Vibora Bay, he always enjoyed the city and considered it part of his "home turf." He frequently fished and camped in San Sebastien Swamp north of the city between tours, and more than once assisted local police in solving particularly bizarre or mysterious crimes. When World War II broke out, Pendragon offered his services to the Army and was assigned to the Haynesville Project, working to understand and defeat Axis mystics like Der Totenkopf and the Iron Father. Though both were far out of his league as mystics, his research and advice were extremely helpful to the war effort.

After the war, Pendragon returned to St. Augustine, where he lived in happy retirement, performing occasionally for charities, acting as a consultant for the FBI on weird crimes, and periodically visiting Vibora Bay (often to walk in the San Sebastien Swamp.) He died of stomach cancer in 1970.



abandoned. Vibora Bay did better than most cities, but even the Queen City was not immune to the general economic downturn.

In the early 1930s, President Roosevelt created the Works Progress Administration and Civilian Conservation Corps in an effort to get thousands of Americans back to work, usually on massive civil construction projects. Both agencies did a great deal of work in Florida, creating and improving national parks and building highways, tidal walls, and dams.

THE GOLDEN AGE BEGINS: 1938-1945

The RSvKg, a secret Nazi mystical organization, performed hideous experiments on May 1, 1938, changing both its leader Erich Hessler into a half-demonic monster and the rest of the world into a place where the fantastic would become almost commonplace. Vibora Bay, which had always been something of a locus for the strange and mystical, became even more so. The city, which had always prided itself on its sense of tolerance, had gradually become home over the last few decades to a number of people who struggled to fit in in other locations, whether due to their marginalized religious beliefs, their unusual hobbies, or even their paranormal abilities. For whatever reason, Vibora Bay had become a city that welcomed the unusual, and when the

latent magic in the universe was released/enhanced/conjured by the spells cast in Germany, a certain percentage of those unusual folks also became considerably more powerful.

On a daily basis life in Vibora Bay remained largely unchanged. But there were little differences, ones that could be noticed if you knew where to look, or were simply lucky. Vibora Bay had always had more than its share of psychics and spiritual advisors, but now their predictions began to come true with much greater frequency and accuracy. Dowsters and cartomancers, demon-raisers and demon-hunters, and Voodoo priests all plied their trades in the city.

Across the country there was an outbreak of superhuman activity, and the crime rate began to rise as garish costumes and masks became the order of the day. In Vibora Bay there was little interest in costumes — adventurers like magician Max Pendragon and two-fisted detective Vic Flint eschewed masks and secret identities, but still battled foreign spies, mad scientists, and mobsters. Mystics whose motivations were less pure also made their way to Vibora Bay. While some were content to fleece the wealthy with their unique powers, others trafficked in darker circles and made unholy deals with abyssal beings.

The coming of World War II restarted Florida's flagging economy, as factories started producing materiel and pilots and sailors came to the Sunshine State to train and deploy. On the home front, production from Florida's citrus groves increased dramatically as a new generation of soldiers needed supplies. Max Pendragon joined the Haynesville Project, and Vic Flint became a sergeant in the Army.

After the end of the war, Florida was a primary destination for young soldiers by the thousands to settle down in and raise their families. Another boom period had begun.

PEACE AND QUIET: 1947-1960

As Americans turned their attentions from war overseas back to their families and businesses at home, Florida began another stretch of expansion and prosperity. Vibora Bay benefitted from the economic boom; it more than doubled in size between the end of the war and 1960 and became a true metropolis.

Racial conflict became a primary concern in northern Florida during this period. The Ku Klux Klan actively tried to keep black voters away from the polls in 1948, resorting to violent attacks and burnings. In 1951 H. T. Moore, the state's NAACP Director and a prominent lawyer who had recently defended a black man in a prominent rape case, was killed in his home by an exploding bomb. Several civil rights groups, both black and white, called on Governor Fuller Warren to ban the Ku Klux Klan, but he refused, citing its constitutional rights of free speech and assembly. Black churches and Jewish synagogues across the state were firebombed. Vibora



Bay almost seemed a haven during this tumultuous period. It was victimized by relatively few such incidents, though many residents had friends or relations elsewhere who were affected.

In the post-war period, the public generally turned away from its previous fascination with superheroic activities, and Vibora Bay was no exception. The Mafia quietly reclaimed control of most forms of vice in the city, and few local mystics made any sort of public splash. The times were quiet and conservative, and most practitioners of magic, even in a friendly city like Vibora Bay, knew to keep their profiles low.

CHANGE IS GONNA COME: 1961-1980

In the early 1960s, costumed superhumans returned to the landscape, and the newspapers carried stories of battles fought, crimes committed, and crises narrowly averted. At the same time, mankind began to look beyond its own planet for the first time as the age of space exploration began, and Florida was at the center of it. NASA began its operations at Cape Canaveral in 1958 with the launch of Explorer I, and the influx of scientists and military men to the state began to influence the state's culture (as well as its educational priorities). Astronaut Shawn Beatty was accidentally exposed to a burst of radiation during a test flight and became the superhero Captain Orbit, who was Florida's primary crimefighter during the Silver Age thanks to his abilities of flight, enhanced strength, and telescopic vision. Though based in Jacksonville, he appeared in Vibora Bay frequently.

The social upheavals of the era were evident in the streets of Vibora Bay. Civil rights groups of various stripes protested regularly, often causing turmoil more than social progress. Cuban refugees fleeing Castro's revolution poured into Florida's major cities, and though Vibora Bay was not as strongly affected as Miami, the influx of illegal immigrants strained the city's resources.

At the same time, gang activity became a problem. Organized crime in the city had long been the domain of the by-now well established Bondi mob, but increasingly it had ignored the poorer, mostly black Weston neighborhoods in favor of Easton. Several street gangs entered the resulting vacuum. The most notorious among them was the Shadows, a well-organized and efficiently violent gang with ties to several radical revolutionary and Black Power groups. By the time the Bondis had even noticed their existence, the Shadows were firmly entrenched from Catalina to Cypress Grove. The best the mobsters could manage was a negotiated peace and continued control over gambling rackets citywide — the Bondis had firmly lost out in the areas of vice and the increasingly profitable illegal drug market.

Flavio Bondi died in 1972. According to police files, his hand-picked successor was his protégé, restaurateur Guy Sweetland (see page 85). Sweetland's succession was challenged by several other mobsters from Bondi's power structure, but the rebellions were swiftly quelled and the transfer of power handled with minimal violence. Sweetland revealed himself to be a crafty negotiator, finding and paying off corrupt police officials and negotiating peace with the Shadows (while secretly assisting them in keeping other gangs from becoming too effective, thus minimizing the number of rivals he had to keep track of).

Also in 1972, Vibora Bay became the home base of another superhuman defender: the demonically-possessed trucker Speed Demon. When a demonic entity possessed driver Tom Lively, the lucky charm given to him by his father turned out to have powerful magics that protected him. Instead of becoming an evil creature, Speed Demon could transform into demonic form while retaining his own personality. He used his powers as a "Good Samaritan" while continuing to drive 18-wheelers between Vibora Bay and various points west, while occasionally battling assorted evil mages and Satanic cults. Lively lost his demonic powers in 1983 while battling another demon and retired from adventuring, though he still drives for Delphinus today.

THE OUTCASTS

The Speed Demon wasn't the only hero in Vibora Bay during the Silver and early Bronze Ages. Beginning in the late 1960s, several strange crimefighters were attracted to the Queen City by its tolerant attitude... and perhaps other forces of which they were unaware. One by one they met, and eventually they banded together in a group they called "the Outcasts" — a name taken from their feelings

THE MARIELITO BOATLIFT

In April, 1980, Fidel Castro, facing increasing dissent and a plummeting economy, opened the port of Mariel in Cuba to outside shipping. Cuban immigrants already in Florida began to send hundreds of craft from Miami to Mariel to bring family, friends, and other refugees from Cuba into America illegally. It's estimated that over 120,000 Cubans entered Florida between April and September of 1980, as the Coast Guard was taxed to its limits by the "Mariel Boatlift." Though most of the "Marielitos" were simply searching for a better life, a sizable percentage were criminals who had recently been released from Cuban jails. Many were stopped at the border by INS officials, but many more made it through, and those criminals quickly joined the drug-importing underworld of several Florida cities, primarily Miami but also Tampa and Vibora Bay.



of isolation and rejection, since in the eyes of many they were freaks and monsters. Despite society's scorn, on more than one occasion they used their abilities to save Vibora Bay from menaces many of its residents wouldn't have been able to comprehend even if they'd known about them.

The membership of the Outcasts shifted periodically, as one member or another followed his dreams (or private demons) into and out of Vibora Bay. Some of the members included: the Mammoth, a shaggy, immensely strong man; a blind precognitive who called himself Dr. Oracle; an "elemental metamorph" named Copycat; and an eerie man(?) known as Enigma who claimed to have his own pocket dimension.

THE QUEEN CITY: 1981 TO THE PRESENT

Vibora Bay has continued to grow in size and influence, like the rest of Florida. Vibora Bay and Miami are rivals in their cultural influence on the state, though the Queen City is still considered more "traditional." Nevertheless, the city and its residents wield a lot of power in the halls of state government.

The city has remained fairly prosperous despite the occasional natural disaster. In March 1990, severe flooding from overflowing rivers after weeks of extreme rainfall caused many millions of dollars in damage, and ruined many homes and businesses. Similarly, hurricanes like Opal (1995) and Frances and Ivan (2004) have done enormous structural damage to Vibora Bay, but each time the local citizenry has patiently rebuilt in the city's timeless style.

Organized crime reached a point of stability in the early 1990s, when Clark Robinson took control of the gangs formerly associated with the Shadows and restructured them into the criminal organization known alternately as the Big Picture or Shadow Tower (see page 85). After a period of gang warfare, Robinson and Sweetland reached a peaceful accord, and each has concentrated on his own turf since then. In 2002, police officials (with the aid of reporters from the *Vibora Bay Banner* and, reportedly, the behind-the-scenes help of a couple of costumed adventurers) discovered that Police Commissioner John Paris had received payments from the mob. Though the resulting scandal didn't quite reach Sweetland himself, it did lead to a wave of "reformer" candidates getting elected or appointed, including Mayor Richenda Barker.

Beginning in the early 1990s, Vibora Bay began to attract more and more costumed residents. The occult investigators Brother Thunder and Sister Rain, who protect the citizens of Weston from supernatural threats, began their careers around 1990, and in 1994 the well-known heroes Black Mask and Dr. Ka both took up the mantle of defending the city. Recent years have brought additional heroes like Amphibian, Redsnake, and Juryrig, along with the perhaps-inevitable wave of costumed criminals to oppose them. Lurking in the shadows is the mysterious Robert Caliburn, whose agenda isn't always clear but who seems to command respect from both mundane and mystic forces. Viborans have adapted to these new manifestations of oddness in their lives with predictable equanimity. As they say, it's all part of life in the Queen City, and they wouldn't have it any other way.

chapter two:



THE LAY OF THE LAND

GULF BREEZES



Located on the Florida Panhandle, the lovely city of Vibora Bay is about sixty miles east of Pensacola and eighty miles southwest of Tallahassee. By population, Vibora Bay is the largest city in the state, with just over 800,000 inhabitants (slightly more than Jacksonville, which has 750,000), and the largest “metropolitan statistical area” (including the various smaller cities and communities around it) with a total population of 1.8 million (the Miami/Hialeah/Coral Gables area is next, at around 1.2 million). Since Florida is the fourth-largest state in the country, this makes Vibora Bay one of the most important and influential American cities.

Vibora Bay sits on the coast of the Gulf of Mexico — the enormous, partially-landlocked sea that borders five American states and five more of Mexico, as well as the island of Cuba. The Gulf was probably formed about 300 million years ago, perhaps by subsidence of the sea floor, and though it’s shallow around the “rim” it becomes quite deep (as much as 4 km) in the central and southwest areas. It’s a major waterway for shipping and industry, as well as fishing and offshore mining.

The water of the Gulf can be astonishingly warm. Vibora Bay’s excellent commercial beaches are no exception, averaging over 27° Celsius (80° Fahrenheit) during the summer months and rarely dropping below 15° C (60° F) even in the depths of winter. The waters are considerably calmer in the Gulf than on the Atlantic side of the state, which means there’s little surf unless there’s a storm brewing (an event that draws a few thrillseekers to locations like Seagrove and Panama City Beach, despite the best efforts of police and rescue workers).

Thanks to a minimal amount of sediment reaching the shore by river in this area, the waters

along the coastline are often breathtakingly clear and green, in delicate shades of turquoise and emerald. The white sands on a sunny day can be blinding to tourists caught without sunglasses. Since Vibora Bay sits well back on the North American continental shelf, the water remains shallow for a considerable distance, allowing waders to walk hundreds of yards out from shore in some locations. However, as the city’s name indicates, it sits on an excellent natural bay with the deep water necessary to support shipping.

Seasons

Vibora Bay’s climate is cool compared to the rest of Florida in the winter and early spring — the temperature can actually drop below freezing one or two nights a year. Locals still talk of the Winter of ’85, when some claim to actually have seen snow fall one afternoon. In the winter months precipitation is infrequent but predictable: about three to four inches of rainfall monthly, typically during the evenings.

As summer comes on, both the mercury and humidity rise, leading to some torturous days when both are in the nineties. The combination of temperature and humidity often slows down the pace of life considerably; no one wants to move around a lot, much less run or play sports, when just stepping outside is enough to make you break a sweat. Most days are sunny and clear, though torrential storms become more common, bringing down large drops of rain to flood streets and terrify drivers. Vibora Bay is actually clear almost three hundred days out of each year... but as the locals say, those other sixty or so can be a doozy.

HURRICANES AND TROPICAL STORMS

Hurricanes and tropical storms strike the Vibora Bay area regularly. The largest one in recent history was Hurricane Opal (October, 1995), which did nearly \$2 billion in damage between Vibora Bay and Pensacola despite the best efforts of Tempest and the supers working for the World Meteorological Organization to blunt its force. The WMO team had better luck with Hurricane Frances (September, 2004), which caused some flooding but relatively little damage... but not as much with Hurricane Ivan that same month, which damaged hundreds of millions of dollars’ worth of buildings.

The generic term for storms like these is “tropical cyclone,” which refers to any organized low-pressure system featuring a rotating wind pattern and accompanying thunderstorms. If the local average wind speed is below 34 miles an hour, tropical

VIBORA BAY TEMPERATURES

Month	Average Temperature
January	10°-15° C (50°-60° F)
February	13°-18° C (55°-65° F)
March	15°-21° C (60°-70° F)
April	18°-24° C (65°-75° F)
May	21°-25° C (70°-77° F)
June	27°-31° C (80°-88° F)
July	27°-32° C (80°-90° F)
August	28°-35° C (83°-95° F)
September	24°-29° C (75°-85° F)
October	21°-25° C (70°-77° F)
November	15°-21° C (60°-70° F)
December	13°-18° C (55°-65° F)



cyclones are referred to as “tropical depressions.” Once the average wind speed exceeds that level, they’re called “tropical storms” and are assigned a name by the US National Weather Service. If the average wind speed exceeds 74 mph, then they’re properly referred to as hurricanes or typhoons.

Hurricane season typically consists of August and September, though hurricanes may appear any time between July and November. Some years have none at all, while a particularly bad year might see as many as five; two is a typical number.

Hurricanes and tropical storms can make excellent plot devices, complicating nearly any sort of adventure set in Vibora Bay... or even serving as the central event of an adventure, with heroes trying to rescue innocents and minimize property damage. Supervillains may take advantage of a storm to distract heroes and law enforcement from a scheme, or perhaps the storm itself has an unnatural feel to it, presaging the arrival of some terrible mystic menace. Or a powerful Vibora Bay thunderstorm might just provide background color for a completely unrelated story, only slightly inconveniencing a heroine on her nightly patrol.

Elevation

Like most of Florida, Vibora Bay is extremely flat. The city averages a height of about 34 meters (17”, or 110 feet) above sea level, with few variations. The entire city runs slightly uphill from the coastline north to the 20 Freeway, but casual walkers probably won’t notice. Across the freeway it again begins to slope gently down into the swamps. Outside of town to the northeast are the Seminole

Hills, which barely deserve the name as they top out under 61 meters (30.5”, or 200 feet) above sea level. The Western Highlands area, beginning approximately a hundred miles to the northwest, is the highest part of the state, but even there the elevations max out at around 105 meters (52.5”, or 345 feet).

Geology

The peninsula of Florida is a vast arch of limestone that emerged from the ocean floor between 300 and 400 million years ago. Most of the area (including Vibora Bay itself) remained underneath sea level until about one million years ago (well after the age of dinosaurs). When the sea level lowered after the ice age, Florida emerged as a peninsula dotted with inland lakes and extensive networks of caves, springs, and sinkholes carved by water draining through the limestone.

The beaches along the shorelines on either side of the city are dazzlingly white and remarkable pure Appalachian quartz, washed downstream from inland mountains. The purity and fineness of the sand is another result of the lack of runoff reaching the Gulf from the nearby rivers: since there’s so little turbulence and new sediment dropped on the shoreline, the waves here have pounded the same material for many thousands of years, until everything but the hard quartz has eroded into dust and the quartz itself has reached a uniform size and consistency.

The Gulf basin contains vast reservoirs of oil products. Offshore drilling programs in the Gulf provide the United States with about an eighth of

its petroleum and a quarter of its natural gas, and employ over 50,000 Americans. The oil industry is big business in Vibora Bay.

Local Flora And Fauna

The Florida Panhandle is home to a vast array of wildlife, and a surprisingly high percentage of it (at least in the areas surrounding Vibora Bay) is dangerous to humans. Nevertheless, Viborans are deeply attached to and protective of the plants and animals around them.

PLANTS AND TREES

The swamps and forests to the north of the city are thick with trees, most commonly cypress and oak but also palms, slash pines, and even mangroves down close to the shore (as they're very tolerant of salty soil). Most of these are coated with the ubiquitous Spanish moss, an airborne opportunist that drapes over branches, clings to roofs, and creates thick, tangled canopies over paths and small roads. Less common but still seen are fruit trees such as mango, lemon, tangerine, and even banana trees (which in this area mostly produce small, hard, green, and largely-inedible fruits).

As for flowering plants and bushes, the greater Vibora Bay area is home to dozens of species, many of which combine to create the unique floral scent of the city and the outlying suburbs: hibiscus, frangipani, oleander, and spider lilies, along with

cassia and bougainvillea vines. The spectacular red, orange, and golden leaves of the royal poinciana dot the hillsides of Seminole Hills. Most well-known in the area, however, is probably the lovely but toxic cup of gold, whose flowers bloom in white but turn yellow soon after opening.

Some of the varieties of flowers in the Viboran swamps are rare or endangered. Unscrupulous collectors and scientists sometimes creep into the swamp (or send hirelings) to harvest these unusual blooms. Both state and federal authorities remain alert for trafficking in endangered species.

ANIMAL LIFE

A large number of unusual animals can also be found near the Queen City. Most obvious are the snakes, whose presence gave the area its name ("Bay of Vipers"). There are over forty species of ophidians in Vibora Bay, several of which are found almost nowhere else in the state (one, the blue rat snake, *Elaphe obsoleta vibora*, is unique to this part of the Panhandle). Of these, six are venomous and worth particular mention: the southern copperhead and eastern coral snake (both of whom have dangerous but rarely lethal venom, primarily of concern to the very young, elderly, or infirm — use the write-up for the Coral Snake in *The HERO System Bestiary*, but reduce the RKA portion of their venom to 2d6); the cottonmouth, or water moccasin (whose venom is particularly dangerous, as is its habit of hanging out on low branches over rivers or streams, where it can be frightened by passing boats and drop on unsuspecting waders — use the venom write-up for the Coral Snake in the *Bestiary*); and three kinds of rattlesnakes, the eastern diamondback, timber, and dusky pygmy (use the Rattlesnake write-up in the *Bestiary*).

Alligators And Crocodiles

The swamps north of Vibora Bay are also home to both alligators and crocodiles, though the latter are considerably rarer. The less aggressive alligators typically run from 2.7 to 3.66 meters (1-2", or 9 to 12 feet) in length, though at least one specimen captured at a local golf course was over 5 meters (2.5", or 17 feet) long! They're often seen sunning themselves along the riverbanks north of the San Sebastien Swamp, and occasionally appear in marshes or ponds as well. Attacks on humans are rare, and usually the result of human stupidity (either teasing one or attempting to feed it are the most common explanations). Alligators "hiss" when they're angry, which calls any others in the area.

Crocodiles, on the other hand, are much rarer (they're on the endangered species list, and it's estimated there are maybe 500 left in the wild in Florida). Their range of sizes is much greater, from 1.2 to 4.6 meters (.5-2", or 4 to 15 feet) in length depending on age and subspecies, and they're considerably more aggressive toward humans. They prefer mixed freshwater/saltwater habitats and porous or shell beaches (like the shores of the East Bay near Pensacola).

It's illegal to feed or otherwise harass alligators or crocodiles in the state of Florida. If one is seen



outside of its natural habitat, Animal Control officers are responsible for safely removing it.

Fish

Florida's Panhandle area is also well known for its plentiful stocks of fish from the Gulf of Mexico. The commercial fish and shellfish harvest by Americans from the Gulf annually is about 1.8 billion pounds, or about one-fifth of the total harvest in the country by weight and nearly a quarter by revenue (over \$900 million). Mackerel, redfish (especially in the winter), and grouper are the largest catches in the area, though there are dozens of species commercially fished. Shrimp, scallops, oysters, and fresh- and saltwater sport fishing are also huge industries. Vibora Bay also occasionally sees bottlenose dolphins and the endangered, nearly blind manatee, but both are rare this far north.

Of course, the Gulf's waters have dangers of their own. Vibora Bay is home to the National Shark Research Center, co-sponsored by the University of Florida and funded by thousands of private members. Most frequently seen are bull, tiger, nurse, and hammerhead sharks, though makos and even great whites have been reported. Apart from sharks, divers and swimmers off the coasts of the city must also be aware of barracuda, moray eels, stingrays, toadfish (small gray fish with large toad-like eyes on the tops of their heads that bury themselves in the silt at the bay's bottom, leaving only their poisonous dorsal spines showing), and even the occasional swarm of Portuguese Man-o-Wars.

Other Animals

There are few mammals in the Vibora Bay area larger than raccoons, opossums, and marsh rabbits, though the San Sebastien Swamp is home

to a small number of bobcats and panthers, and there are coyotes in the Seminole Hills area. Deer are fairly common in some parts of the area. Rats, squirrels, moles, and voles are common, as are turtles and other small lizards. Vibora Bay's shorelines are home to a wide range of birds, including the majestic herons of the beaches, wood storks in the swamps and wetlands, and pelicans and gulls on the wharves. Birders consider the general area a "target rich" environment.

Every August, Vibora Bay's parks and lawns are covered by thousands of monarch butterflies, resting during their annual migration to Mexico. It's a tradition of the city's deep, humid summers to have street parties celebrating their arrival, with bands and dancers dressed in gaudy orange, black, and white clothes.

The San Sebastien Swamp

The swamps near (some would say "surrounding") Vibora Bay are known as the San Sebastien Swamp, a name of uncertain provenance that supposedly dates from the days of Spanish settlement. While nowhere near as large as the Everglades, the San Sebastien remains one of the most extensive undisturbed natural areas in the state. Parts of it are protected as both state and national wildlife preserves, while others are open for public hunting and fishing.

For the most part, the San Sebastien is unsettled and undeveloped — the land is at best marshy, unfit for agriculture or major building projects, so mankind has mostly left it alone. Periodic attempts over the centuries to penetrate deeper into the swamps, or even to drain parts of them,



have always met with failure thanks to the thick undergrowth, swarms of biting insects, copious venomous serpents, and countless other difficulties. Despite these problems, here and there some loner or family has set up a shack and somehow made a life for himself amidst the snakes, stench, and periodic flooding. Some families have lived there for generations, shunning contact with the outside world as much as possible. Viborans refer to such people as “swamp folk,” and consider them inbred and backward.

The Skunk Ape

The swamp’s most infamous denizen isn’t some hairy-palmed fisherman armed with a shotgun — it’s the Skunk Ape, Vibora Bay’s own contribution to the world of cryptozoology.

Eight feet tall, and possessing a stench that could floor a charging rhino, the Skunk Ape first entered popular lore in the 1920s, though reports of a mysterious “swamp-man” date back to Revolutionary War times. According to the most common tales, the Skunk Ape lives by catching and eating

small animals... and sometimes humans who venture too far into the swamp! Others believe he’s a gentle giant who just wants to live by himself in peace, or that he’s some sort of “protector of the swamps.” People who believe the latter tale often attribute the problems that various developers have had trying to build in or drain parts of the San Sebastien to the Skunk Ape, claiming he vandalizes construction equipment and causes other problems that make building in the swamp impossible.

Cryptozoologists have advanced many theories to explain the Skunk Ape, though they’ve uncovered remarkably little evidence of his existence (mostly just a few grainy photographs showing roughly a humanoid “being” with what might be plants and mud stuck on its body). Most believe “he” is actually an unknown species of primate that lives in the swamp, or perhaps a surviving clan of Neanderthals. More extravagant theories claim he’s a space alien, an insane, immortal superhuman, or some sort of robot.

AROUND THE CITY



Like all large cities, Vibora Bay is composed of numerous neighborhoods and districts, each with its own unique features and character. Some of the more prominent and important areas are described below.

WESTON

The western half of Vibora Bay has traditionally been known as “the wrong side of the tracks” (or, more accurately, of High Street). Poorer, less well-developed, less well maintained, and more crime-ridden than Easton, it’s euphemistically described as a “working-class area.” Its population is primarily (though not entirely) black and Hispanic, though recent years have seen gentrification (and thus an influx of whites) in a few areas near High Street.

THE AIRPORT/BUSINESS PARK

This entire neighborhood sprang up around Vibora Bay International Airport after its refurbishment in the late 1960s. It primarily consists of business-class and chain hotels, car rental agencies, storage facilities, and small offices organized into blocks. The freeway access ramps for getting on and off Route 98 are famous for being jammed with traffic, a problem that only gets worse when there’s a football game at nearby Hammerhead Stadium.

ATWATER

Atwater is a small, mostly residential neighborhood wedged in between Inner Weston, Far Weston, and the 98 Freeway. Many of the people who live there work at the nearby airport or at Hammerhead Stadium. Compared to many Weston neighborhoods, Atwater is peaceful and safe, with lower crime rates, better schools, and better shopping and services. In part this results from Atwater’s relatively high voter turnout during election year. Neighborhood organizers have learned that a loud voice gets the most attention, so they work hard to ensure their neighbors turn out in large numbers.

CATALINA

Catalina, the poorest neighborhood of Weston, is largely made up of small ethnic enclaves and rundown apartment complexes beset with street gangs. Drugs, poverty, homelessness, crime, and related social ills are rampant. What businesses remain here are primarily fast food restaurants, check-cashing facilities, and discounters, along with a number of pawn shops, struggling corner markets, and the like. Most Eastoners — and for that matter, most Westoners — wouldn’t go into Catalina for anything.

CYPRESS GROVE PARK

This lovely green park, featuring small fish ponds and cypress trees, was refurbished in the 1970s. Since then limited funds have been available for its upkeep, and several of the facilities are showing signs of wear. The park has an exaggerated (but not undeserved) reputation for being a crime problem — several street gangs find the quiet groves convenient for drug sales, and pimps and prostitutes likewise ply their trades here at night.

FAR WESTON

A largely middle-class residential area, Far Weston has little neighborhood identity of its own. Instead, it’s a collection of mini-neighborhoods a block or two wide, made up mostly of apartment buildings. There are more chain stores here than in most parts of the city thanks to the absence of community groups committed to keeping a particular “look” to the area. Weston Plaza, a sort of park and open-air entertainment venue, is the most notable feature in the area; concerts, art shows, festivals, and political gatherings are regularly held there.



HOLLINGS HILL

Hollings Hill is what passes for an “upper class” section of Weston. In addition to townhouses and nice apartment complexes, it has plenty of detached housing and well-maintained green lawns. It’s also home to the University of Florida Vibora Bay campus; the neighborhoods around the campus itself cater heavily to the student population.

INNER WESTON

Inner Weston is the middle-class heart of the western half of the city. Originally the home of freed slaves and Creoles, it’s primarily made up of brick row houses and tall white apartment buildings featuring Viboran art deco statues and storefront businesses. The neighborhood includes several small pockets of other ethnicities, including Chinese, Vietnamese, and Korean, and is well-known for its restaurants.

THE JUMBLE

This Jumble consists of approximately five square blocks that are home to a large number of

Haitian immigrant families and other recent émigrés from the Caribbean. It’s centered on the intersection of Nat Turner Street and De Soto Boulevard, and is the location of the Pierre Street Community Center and Sister Rain’s hounfort at the corner of Pierre and Dahomey (see page 81). Compared to many neighborhoods in Weston, it’s relatively peaceful and safe, but nowhere near as crime-free as a corresponding Easton neighborhood.

MIDTOWN

Midtown is the “hipper” business side of High Street. It includes the offices of several radio and TV stations, and the clubs and nightspots of MacKenzie Square (named after John MacKenzie, a general who heroically served under Andrew Jackson during the Battle of New Orleans).

Blackman’s Square

More prominent still than MacKenzie Square is Blackman’s Square, which was the location of the city’s slave-trading block prior to the Civil War. During the Fifties and Sixties it was a rallying point for many civil rights demonstrations and marches. It’s now a tour-



ist attraction and includes the world-famous Dubois Slavery and Civil Rights Museum. The Square is the frequent site of political rallies, small concerts, and often-raucous parties during city festivals.

UNION STATION

Originally the center of local train traffic and the connection to the rest of Florida's train lines in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Union Station was once the thriving cultural center of Vibora Bay. In the last thirty years, however, the closing of most of the railways has cost the area a great deal of its luster. The train yards remain, and still function, but they no longer attract the commerce they once did, giving the whole neighborhood a sort of rundown, not-living-up-to-its-potential kind of feel.

Union Station was once home to several famous old clubs and bars. A few of them still exist, but others have converted into modern theaters or strip joints, or been turned into warehouses. Most adults looking for a pleasant night out on the town don't think "let's go to Union Station."

If it weren't so far into Weston, Union Station would be a prime target for gentrification, or at least renewal. However, its proximity to Route 30A offers some hope in this regard. Over the past decade, some young artists and families have moved into the neighborhood to take advantage of cheap rents. They've restored a little "hipness" to the area. New music and clothing stores, art galleries, and even a couple of independent rap record labels have opened here recently.

WESTON SHORE

This area is a "working pier," as opposed to the more tourism-oriented piers and wharves in the center of the city's shoreline. It's mainly devoted to commercial fishing, with some shipping done here as well. The Weston Shore Fish Market is a center of activity every morning, as the freshest catches are sold to the city's dozens of seafood restaurants and markets. North of the shoreline for about a mile are some excellent seafood restaurants (including the famed Blue Marlin Grill) and lots of warehousing and manufacturing plants, interspersed with blue-collar bars. The historical Mission San Paolo Church is also located in this neighborhood just a few blocks from the shore.

HIGH STREET

High Street is Vibora Bay's "main drag," a six-lane major artery that divides the city in half. It begins outside of town as a turnoff from the secondary freeway, then crosses both 98 and 30A before terminating at Shore Street just before the coastline. The Queen City's most prominent businesses are located in the office buildings and skyscrapers — many designed personally by William Hand — that line either side of High Street.



THE FINANCIAL DISTRICT

The northeastern side of High Street is the land of big business and large glass skyscrapers, including the hated ACI Building, which stands out from the rest of the skyline by virtue of both its size and ugliness. Insurance companies, banking institutions, investment firms, oil companies, and various businesses connected to the major shipping firms maintain their corporate headquarters here.

Scattered here and there throughout the Financial District are shops and restaurants, all among the finest, most elegant, and most expensive in the city. Chief among them is Voltaire, a restaurant specializing in French cuisine and owned by famous chef Arlen Rensaleer.

THE TANGLES

Sometimes referred to as “Old Town,” these collections of alleys and twisty cobblestone lanes emanate from either side of High Street (which is frequently the only recognizable point of reference — lost tourists and visitors breathe a sigh of relief when they get back to it). Legend says the streets themselves occasionally shift and move, leading even natives to occasionally “discover” new shops and streets.

The Tangles are home to countless record stores, head shops, antique stores, magic shops, and completely uncategorizable shops that sell all manner of oddities. An intrepid shopper may emerge from the Tangles after a day of shopping with all sorts of newly-acquired treasures (including some he probably couldn't have found anywhere else in the world)... or with regret for a wasted day.

THE WATERFRONT

The center of Vibora Bay's shoreline is a tourist-oriented waterfront (as opposed to the working waterfronts on either side of it). There are restaurants, gift shops, a number of small museums and similar cultural attractions, companies that offer boat tours of the coast or deep-sea fishing trips out into the Bay or Gulf, and many similar businesses. A short boardwalk, anchored by the enormous Windsong Mall, runs along the beachfront, but the similar boardwalks outside of town on either shore are more popular.

EASTON

The heart of Vibora Bay for most of the city's existence, Easton is the “right side of the tracks” — the place where most prosperous, most prominent, and most influential people in the city live. City government and many related institutions, are located here, as are the city's best residential neighborhoods. Its residents are mostly white, though the percentage of minority residents has risen significantly in the past twenty years or so.

CITY HALL

City Hall, located in Inner Easton near the “three points” of that neighborhood, the Financial District, and the Easton Tangles, is a large and

imposing structure. It's an outstanding example of Greek revivalism, with broad marble steps and tall columns, and fine statuary at each corner of the plaza. It was extensively damaged in an attack by the Crimelords, a supervillain team, in 1994, but the city spared no expense to restore the building to its original form.

Several other city office buildings surround City Hall, creating a sort of governmental plaza where you can see many city employees eating their lunch outside when the weather is fine. Located nearby is Bunker Fountain, a sculpture park where street performers play jazz, dance, paint, or annoy people with their incessant miming. The city sponsors a series of outdoor concerts and other entertainments here during the summer and autumn.

CLUET FARMS

This neighborhood was once the site of the old, and extensive, Cluet family plantation (see page 10). After the Civil War several moneyed residents bought up the land and built fine mansions on it. Those families are still among the leading citizens of Vibora Bay today, and this neighborhood is a haven for old money.

DUVAL STREET

Duval Street (frequently simply called “Duval”) is Vibora Bay's legitimate theater district, with four major theaters and several smaller independents, along with a handful of performance art spaces, trendy galleries, and painfully hip restaurants. The neighborhood has a high gay and lesbian population, as well as hip young clubbers living in converted lofts. In the city's earliest days this area was settled by several prominent French families, and even today Duval is known for its French restaurants, bakeries, sweetshops, and sidewalk cafes.

EASTON SHORE

Easton Shore is the city's shipping center, with wharves for commercial freight liners and massive cranes on the docks. Sweetland's mob is thought to be heavily connected to the local Longshoremen's Union; many of his employees have businesses and homes in this neighborhood. There's a fair amount of money moving through here on a daily basis, though, and the streets and buildings are pretty well-maintained for what's essentially a dockside district.

FAR EASTON

Originally a collection of cattle farms, Far Easton has become some of the most desirable residential real estate in the city, with upper-middle-class young families and the best schools in the city. One part of it has evolved into the ethnic neighborhood known as Little India, where you'll find the award-winning Vijaya — the only restaurant to seriously challenge Sweetland's for critical supremacy in the city. Far Easton is also the home of idyllic “pseudo-Ivy” Sinclair University campus and the Vibora Bay Zoo.

THE FORUM

Around the ACI Forum is a small, recently-constructed neighborhood of chain sports bars,

memorabilia shops, first-run movie theaters, and open public space. Built primarily in the '80s, it never quite took off the way it was supposed to. The city planners hoped it would revitalize the Bayview neighborhood, but instead Bayview just shifted west and south a few blocks. The city fathers haven't given up on the Forum yet, though.

INNER EASTON

Inner Easton is the part of the city most often thought of, along with the Financial District, as "downtown Vibora Bay." It comprises several square miles of ten- to fifteen-story office buildings, many designed by William Hand and his artistic followers, interspersed with smaller Greek Revival and Art Deco buildings, gothic churches, and red-brick townhouses.

OLDCORNE

Fairly or not, Oldcorne is generally considered to be "the quiet side of town," where nothing much happens. It's certainly true that the neighborhood's population skews toward the elderly and upper middle class, and tends to be more conservative. Oldcorne is the home of the world-famous McClellan Toy Museum, where one can see displays of dolls, boardgames, and wind-up toys spanning several centuries.

WALTON BAYVIEW

According to statistics, Walton Bayview is the most crime-ridden neighborhood in Easton. Traditionally a working-class residential area, in the past forty years it's developed problems with gangs, drugs, the homeless, and the down and nearly out... though it's still better than similar neighborhoods in Weston. Its population is ethnically diverse, with families whose ancestors came over from Italy, Ire-

land, Poland, and Russia. There's little to see in the area except tenements, tiny and run-down detached houses, and neighborhood bars.

WALTON PALMS PARK

"The Palms" is the other major park in the city, with small ponds, baseball fields and basketball courts, and lots of statues. It's generally better-maintained and safer than Cypress Grove, though walking through it alone after dark is still not recommended. It's connected to the Vibora Bay Tennis Center, which has about twenty public courts and a school as well as a six-court professional facility.

THE SUBURBS AND NEARBY CITIES

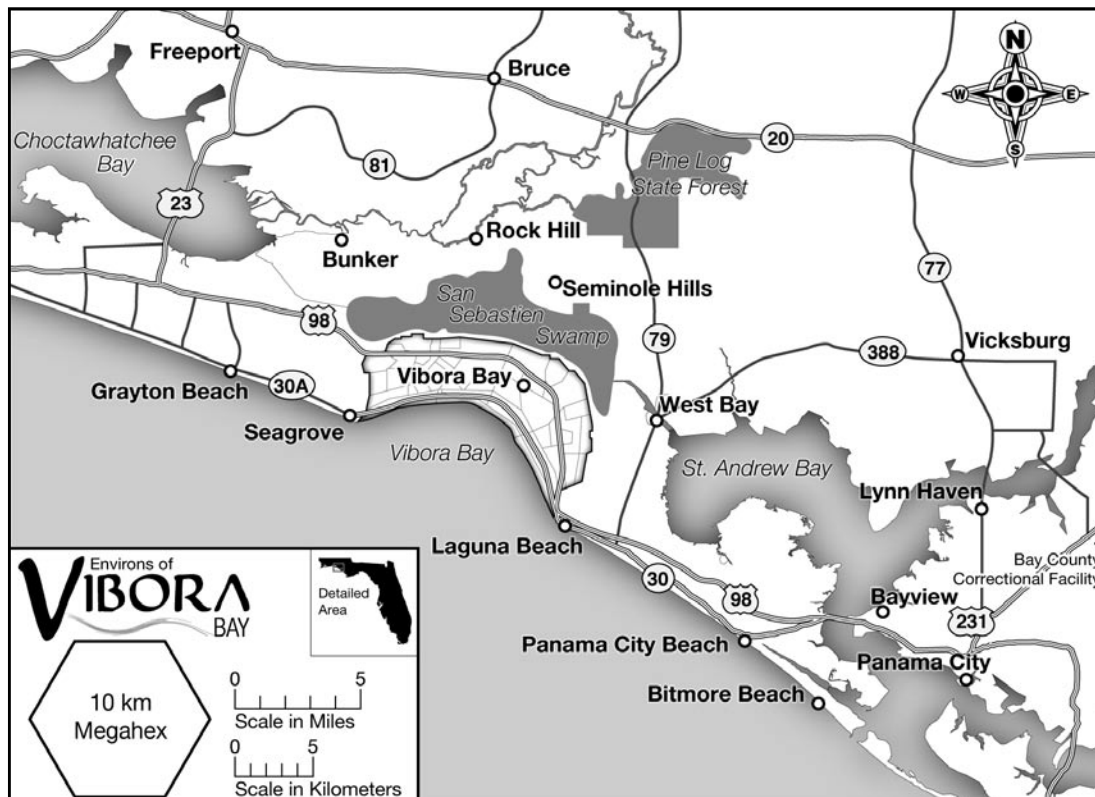
Not everyone who works and plays in Vibora Bay actually lives within the city limits. Like any other American metropolis, the Queen City is surrounded by a ring of suburbs and bedroom communities that house hundreds of thousands of its "residents."

Suburbs

Because of the presence of the San Sebastian Swamp to the north of Vibora Bay proper, many of its true suburbs cluster along the shore to east and west of the city.

GRAYTON BEACH

A few miles west of Vibora Bay, Grayton Beach is a "traditional" beach town devoted to coastal entertainment. There's an extended boardwalk along the shore, and a popular amusement park. To



the north is a state park that heavily promotes eco-tourism packages featuring salt marshes and inland creeks. Grayton Beach has about 4,000 residents.

ROSEMARY BEACH

Rosemary Beach sits on the eastern coast of Vibora Bay. A tourist-oriented town, it's the slightly less expensive alternative to Seagrove directly across the bay, and promotes its beaches as "family-friendly." Rosemary Beach gets some of the spring break spillover of drunken college students every March and April, though it's fairly quiet the rest of the time. It's known for its wide range of bookstores, toy shops, and spas, and has a full-time population of about 7,000.

SEAGROVE

Seagrove, located to the west of Vibora Bay along the Gulf shore, is a combination tourist town (concentrating on "high-end" tourists with plenty of money to spend) and artist colony. Several of its beachside apartment complexes are owned by well-known writers, painters, and sculptors, as well as several famous Hollywood actors and directors. Seagrove has two high-quality golf courses and plenty of quaint and romantic seafood restaurants. The town's population is about 6,000.

SEMINOLE HILLS

Seminole Hills is middle-class suburbia at its finest, with about 20,000 residents. It's relatively young, having been built primarily after World War II, and consists of planned communities featuring rows of similar houses and bright green lawns. It has excellent schools, with some of the best test scores in the northern half of the state.

OTHER SUBURBS

Freeport is a middle class suburb about fifteen miles to the northwest of Vibora Bay. It's home to a great many shopping malls, factory outlets, and a population of about 12,000.

Twelve miles north of the city, Bruce is a blue-collar suburb that's mainly inhabited by factory workers, longshoremen, and their families. Its population is about 6,000.

The middle class suburb of Bunker, about six miles northwest of the city, has about 16,000 inhabitants. Bunker is home to a world-class swimming facility where a number of Olympic aspirants train daily.

Rock Hill is another middle class suburb, with about 12,000 residents. As its name indicates, it's located near a former quarry that's now filled with water, making it a popular recreation site for locals.

Nearby Cities

Near Vibora Bay are several smaller urban areas that maintain extensive economic and cultural ties to the Queen City.

PANAMA CITY

The nearest "big city," with a population of about 70,000, Panama City lives in the shadow of the Queen City and is an affordable alternative for young people seeking an urban lifestyle but unable to afford Viboran rents. Most of the city's industry (commercial fishing and tourism) is based around the St. Andrews Marina. The city is also home of Bay County International Airport, the "backup airport" for the region.

PANAMA CITY BEACH

Home of the "Most Beautiful Beaches In The World" according to its marketing campaigns, Panama City Beach has only 10,000 permanent inhabitants but 30,000 tourists on the average day, peaking in March and April when the city swells in size to accommodate spring breakers and puts on concerts and shows nightly. The town also has a decent zoo, several water parks, and a number of nightclubs popular with Vibora Bay's younger set.

DE FUNIAK SPRINGS

Twenty-five miles to the north is the city of De Funiak Springs, which was built on the shores of the nearly-circular De Funiak Lake. The area is riddled with springs and streams and features some amazing diving and caving. De Funiak Springs has a population of about 50,000, 60% of which is black.

De Funiak Springs has an enormous number of churches for its population, including several different flavors of Baptist and Pentecostal, and the High Apostolic Church. The De Funiak Public Library has a renowned collection of medieval armor and weapons donated by private collectors, including dozens of fascinating pieces from the Crusades.

DESTIN

Farther west along the Gulf shore is the resort town of Destin, a combination of small condominiums and retirement colonies. Recent expansion has taken its population past 25,000, most of them older folks of quiet, conservative bent.

GULF BREEZE

Gulf Breeze is the home of Caffrey Air Force base, and one of the UFO-sighting capitals of the world (see page 59).

CITY GOVERNMENT

A city is more than just streets and neighborhoods. It needs people, too — and chief among those people are the leaders who run the city government.

Organization

Vibora Bay is divided into twenty-four wards, more or less arbitrary divisions the City Council reviews every twelve years. Despite the reviews, the wards themselves have not changed significantly since 1972; they're not due for another review until 2008. Elected representatives from each of these wards plus the mayor make up the City Council, the primary legislative body of the city. City Councillors are elected for three-year terms, staggered so that eight seats are up for re-election every year.

Each City Councillor maintains a "constituency office" somewhere in his ward. There a small number of staffers (usually only two or three, as budgeting for these offices is very tight) handle the Councillor's interactions with the citizens of his ward. Depending on the neighborhoods in a ward, these offices may be located in skyscrapers and run like law firms, or be in small storefronts and staffed by students.

The Mayor and the Controller set the agenda for the Council, which also creates various Committees to work on issues facing the city. Typically any given Councillor is a member of three or four different Committees; the chairmen of important Committees are selected by influence and seniority within the Council. The Mayor herself doesn't serve on any Committees, but receives reports from and acts as an advisor to all of them.

The entire Council meets on the first and third Monday of each month in the Council Chambers, which is next door to City Hall. The meetings are open to the public, and usually include an opportunity for citizens to bring concerns and problems before the Council after the official meeting is over. The meetings begin at 6:00 PM and usually last at least two hours, and often as many as four or five when divisive issues are being considered.

The Mayor

Richenda Barker has been Mayor of Vibora Bay since 2000. A black woman and a Democrat, Barker was born in nearby Seagrove in 1954. She worked for WGHJ as a researcher in the 1970s before joining the staffs of a series of Florida Democratic politicians. She was the advance coordinator for a former Secretary of State during his failed run for the Presidency in 1984, and then chief of staff for Florida's governor from 1988 until 1991. She ran for Mayor for the first time in 1994

and lost narrowly. Thereafter she took a series of consulting jobs for various local businesses, taught courses at UFVB and headed the local Boys and Girls Clubs and the Junior Miss program. She ran again in 2000 and won by a comfortable margin.

In general, Barker is a moderate liberal on most issues — for example, she favors higher taxes on corporations and the wealthy, civil unions for gays but not marriage rights, and severe restrictions on the availability of automatic weapons. While she tries to promote Vibora Bay as business-friendly, some of the larger corporations consider her positions on taxes onerous and would prefer to see her ousted.

The Controller

Earl Jamison is the City Controller, the number-two person in the city's government. A handsome, stocky black man of 53, Jamison's a three-tour Vietnam veteran (he served as a helicopter gunner in the 172nd Air Cavalry) who returned to his hometown in 1975 and went to work for an electronics manufacturing company. There he rose to the position of Senior Vice President of Finance and negotiated the deal to have the company bought out by Harmon Industries in 1989, which made both him and his partners extremely wealthy. After taking more than a year off to travel the world and manage a charitable trust, Jamison ran for Controller in 1991 and won. He's held the position ever since, having been re-elected in '97 and '03, and has developed an impressive array of contacts and favors owed.

Jamison is the voice of fiscal conservatism in Vibora Bay. He portrays himself as one of the "common folk," apparently as opposed to the various liberals, extremists, and eccentrics who tend to dominate the local political scene. It's expected



CITY COUNCIL COMMITTEES

The Standing Committees of the City Council are:

- Administration
- Audit
- Budget Advisory
- Community Services
- Economic Development
- Parks and Waterways
- Planning and Transportation
- Policy and Finance
- Works

At any given time there are usually a half dozen or so temporary committees also active on particular issues, whether special projects the Mayor or Council want to pay particular attention (like the Safety In Schools Task Force) or specific, temporary problems or programs.

he'll run for Mayor in 2006, but his bluntness and obvious disdain for the extreme elements in Vibora Bay has polarized the city. The more centrist elements of the local Republican Party are quietly looking for another candidate, though it's doubtful they'll find one.

Jamison considers most of the mystics and other believers in the supernatural who live in Vibora Bay to be "kooks, nuts, and hippies," and privately wishes they'd all just go away and let his city lose its reputation as a haven for the odd. That said, he's a firm supporter of what he calls "responsible superheroes," whatever the supposed source of their powers.

The City Council

There are twenty-four members of the City Council besides the Mayor, each representing a ward and each with his own agenda. Some of the most prominent or intriguing include:

Gwendolyn Ennis: A black woman in her early 60s representing the Atwater ward, Ennis has served the longest string of consecutive terms in city history, having first been elected in 1975. She's considered one of the "grand old dames" of the city, and little actually gets done on the Council without her approval. She's a moderate who mostly tries to make decisions based on common sense and cooperation rather than ideology. She's also well-known for her temper, and sometimes lets fly with delightfully-sharp barbs during meetings.

Luis Ruggiero: The Councillor from Catalina is a middle-aged man who proudly proclaims his mixed heritage (Hispanic, African-American, and Thai). A former gangbanger on the streets of Weston, Ruggiero credits several city programs like the Boys' Club for helping him see the value of a college education, and now tries to give something back to his community. He spends a lot of his free time walking the streets of his ward, talking with residents about their problems and trying to fight through the city's bureaucracy to help them.

Vincent Midkiff: A real estate developer who made millions on properties in Seagrove, Midkiff got elected from the ward representing Oldcorne in 2001 and is expected to win re-election in 2004. He's pushed hard for the development of several wilderness areas north of the city, including the San Sebastien Swamp.

Susan Kwan: The youngest Councillor on the board, Kwan represents the outer half of Far Easton. She's considered an up-and-coming liberal firebrand who's been openly critical of both Barker and Jamison. Representing the "fringe Left" of the city, she's already amassed a fair amount of political capital from sheer tirelessness, though most assume she's unlikely to go any higher in politics without toning down her image. Kwan figures she has plenty of time for that later — at this point she's mostly she's interested in building her name recognition.

Other Notable City And County Officials

Apart from Vibora Bay's elected leaders, superheroes operating in Vibora Bay might encounter any of these other important officials.

Arthur Goldmann: The Vibora Bay City Engineer is responsible for overseeing numerous building and maintenance projects, ranging from roads and bridges to approval of the work on new construction projects. He often works closely with John Raeder (see below) when the city needs rebuilding after a supervillain attack or hurricane. A hands-on sort of manager, he's likely to take a personal interest in any unusual projects his department has to oversee — such as issuing a safety approval certificate for a new superhero team's headquarters.

Leticia Howard: The City Attorney oversees Vibora Bay's various legal departments while serving as its chief prosecutor for high-profile cases. Her department has an unfortunate reputation for corruption, and she was elected in 2002 on a reform platform. So far, there's been little evidence of any reform in the department.

John Raeder: Raeder is the Director Of Emergency Services for Vibora Bay, a position Mayor Barker appointed him to. Raeder's office coordinates the city's various agencies in response to emergencies, from fires and floods to supervillain attacks. A retiring white man in his early '40s, Raeder an expert at cutting through red tape to get what he needs.

Dr. Paul Sabo: The county's Chief Medical Examiner, Dr. Sabo and his staff investigate any mysterious deaths in the Queen City. He's rapidly approaching retirement age, and has the general demeanor of an affable country doctor despite his grisly duties.

chapter three:



A DAY IN THE LIFE

LIFE IN VIBORA BAY



YOU SAY PO-TAY-TO

The correct Spanish pronunciation of Vibora is “vye-BOR-uh.” The local accent shortens the first vowel (and frequently almost swallows it entirely), making it more like “v’BOR-uh.” Pronouncing it “vee-bor-ah” marks you as a tourist, and local peddlers will immediately raise their prices for you.

VIBORAN ARCHITECTURE

Much of Vibora Bay’s architecture was designed by famous Reconstruction-era architect William Hand (1849-1928) or his various followers and devotees (the so-called “Hand School,” a collection of like-minded builders and designers whose ideas prefigured and influenced the Art Deco movement of the 1920s). These architects tended to reject uniformity and favor size and impressiveness. This explains both the juxtaposition of completely dissimilar buildings placed side-by-side in Vibora Bay, and the tendency toward oversized, dramatic facades and statuary throughout the city, especially on and near High Street.

Hand’s buildings began with classical, usually European designs (he was fond of ancient Greek buildings and frequently used columns of marble, but his later followers were also influenced by the French modernism of the 1920s). Then he added

Continued on next page

Visitors frequently observe that for a city of its size, Vibora Bay retains a relaxed and comfortable “feel.” Partly this is because of the city’s wide range of smaller neighborhoods, each with its own personality — in many ways, Vibora Bay seems to be a collection of small towns, each only a few blocks square. People who live in the Jumble have a very different view of the city than those who live in Oldcorne, and neither has much in common with the denizens of Duval.

The other contributing factor is probably the weather. Most of the time, it’s as beautiful as advertised: warm and sunny with tolerable humidity most of the year, with occasional breaks of powerful storms. Viborans love their beaches and shores, and many begin or end their day with trips to the beach to soak up some rays on the sugary-white sand or a quick swim in the clear Gulf water. The temptation to slip away for a few hours midday can be almost irresistible, and keeps even the high-powered executives at the largest multinational companies from developing the workaholicism common to New York or Millennium City. Even when the weather’s less enjoyable — when the humidity rises to unpleasant levels, or rainstorms keep everyone inside for days — the heat’s likely to keep people from getting too worked up. It’s more comfortable to take things slow.

Even though Florida was largely developed because of tourism, Vibora Bay has managed, through careful planning and a fair amount of luck, to retain its original charm and avoid the overdevelopment and the homogeneity of cities like Orlando and Daytona. There are plenty of chain stores, for example, but they haven’t driven out the small local businesses, and there are no theme parks. Indeed, the city has become a magnet for people specifically looking to avoid that sort of experience. Like the rest of Florida, Vibora Bay is precariously balanced between the traditions of the Deep South and a more urban, cosmopolitan lifestyle. It handles the dichotomy well. Viborans are remarkably polite, for example, and have a healthy respect for the “old ways,” and yet the museums and concert halls reflect the most modern and cutting-edge of trends.

People find they can easily take advantage of Vibora Bay’s proximity to the real wilderness, another aspect of daily life Viborans guard jealously. The “real” Florida — wild, untamed, even a little dangerous — can be reached within only a few miles of the city limits, and though many areas require special permits there are plenty of opportunities for hiking, camping, canoeing, or otherwise getting close to nature.

THE CITY OF SHADOWS

Thanks to a certain amount of media hype, not to mention the presence of mystic-powered superhumans and shops selling Voodoo dolls, it’s easy to overestimate the effect magic has on the typical citizen of Vibora Bay. There are over 800,000 residents, out of which maybe 1% have a genuine belief in and affinity for magic. Out of that small population, only a smaller fraction have significant abilities. However, even that small number is significantly greater than the puissant population of most cities — only New York, San Francisco, and New Orleans (whose range of traditions is much narrower) can claim to be home to anywhere close to that many people with mystical skills. But the average citizen scoffs at the idea of “real magic.”

Most of those who have true ability keep the existence of their powers, or at least their extent, under wraps. Among practitioners of the Hidden Art, publicity is frequently a Bad Thing — it leads to unwanted attention from the media or from crazy, curious, or desperate people. It can even make a mystic a target for rival mystics or the darker forces that exist side by side with our own world. Furthermore, most of the real practitioners know that anyone “acting out” in public only increases the attention on all of them, and this creates a not-so-subtle “peer pressure” among the Mystic World to maintain the facade of normalcy as much as possible. There are too many mystics in the city to invite enemies, so Vibora Bay has become a mystical example of the old truism: “An armed society is a polite society.”

Thus, even in a city as open to the strange and mystical as Vibora Bay traditionally has been, the odds remain high that anyone claiming to have magical powers is lying or at best exaggerating. But true masters do make the city their home, and each in his own way influences the daily life of the Queen City.

For example, a truly astonishing number and variety of religions are represented in Vibora Bay and environs, including the (in)famous High Apostolic Church (see page 59). This is particularly true of the nearby city of De Funiak Springs, which has dozens of churches, temples, mosques, and tree groves dedicated to splinter religions unheard of in most of the world. Partly this is a result of the wide variety of places people emigrate to Vibora Bay from, but also it seems to be part of the city’s overall character to be curious about the spiritual, and to sample a wide range of ideas about how the universe might really work. It’s not uncommon for Viborans to attend services for more than one style of religion, and to assume that many different religions have something worthwhile to offer.

On the other hand, Vibora Bay is also home to a great many frauds who prey on those with a strong need to believe in something beyond themselves. Storefront psychics and palm readers can be found throughout the city, though they're most common in the Tangles. Most have no particular ability beyond an entertaining patter and some skill at tricking their customers into believing they're getting real answers. A typical tarot or tea-leaf reading runs about \$50 for a half-hour session. Not all practicing psychics in the city are frauds, however — for example, Madame Laika Tolochkova (real name: Stephanie Goldschmidt), who runs a small shop in the Weston Tangle, is a genuine precognitive and psychometer (object reader). Unfortunately, as she's discovered, most of her clients prefer entertaining lies to the truth, and she rarely winds up using her powers in her daily work.

In the end, the prevalence of magic and the supernatural in Vibora Bay has little direct or dramatic impact on the lives of the average citizen, any more than typical superheroic activity does in cities with more mundane superhumans. It's always there, but it remains in the background.

SUPERPOWERED MYSTICS

The most powerful mystical factions of the Champions Universe pay close attention to the goings-on in Vibora Bay. An unusually high percentage of the city's best-known superhumans — such as Dr. Ka and Sister Rain — have mystic powers. Mystic villains such as the Crowns of Krim, Talisman, and the Devil's Advocates seem to commit crimes in the city more often than its population and wealth would indicate. More than one citizen has moved away on the assumption that sooner or later Takofanes the Archlich will turn his attention to Vibora Bay. It's thought that mystic organizations, such as DEMON, have a strong presence in the Queen City, though there isn't always much evidence to back up the supposition and rumors.

Getting Around

Vibora Bay International Airport, located on the western edge of town near the 98 Freeway, is the area's primary airport, serving approximately 10 million passengers every year. Mostly known for the sweeping glass and brick facades in its main terminal building, the airport has run at a loss for several decades and is long overdue for technological upgrades, both in its infrastructure and its security and screening systems. It has three main runways and 46 gates, but isn't a hub for any major commercial airline (though all the major lines fly into VBIA). There's a second, smaller airport in Panama City, and several smaller fields in and around Gulf Breeze (not to mention the extensive military facilities there).

WITHIN THE CITY

As for means of transportation around the city, Vibora Bay has a small fleet of picturesque electric streetcars that operate on several of the city's largest streets (High Street, Duval Street, De Soto Boulevard, Magnolia Street, Whitworth Street, Pilar Avenue, and Orozco Boulevard, among others). The cars are each 14 meters (7", or about 48 feet) long, with bench seating and straps for passengers to stand in the aisles. They cost \$1.50 per trip with one free transfer allowed within an hour.

The city also has a larger fleet of regular buses. Locals complain about the noise, cleanliness, and reliability of bus service, but the system functions pretty well and a large portion of the population relies on the buses every day.

Getting a taxi in Vibora Bay is quite easy if you're near a hotel or on one of the main streets, but considerably harder in the outer neighborhoods. The main taxi service is ABC Cabs, whose beige and white sedans are a familiar sight in Midtown or Duval. There are also several smaller independent taxi services that offer a widely-varying quality of service. All cabs in the city cost \$1.50 plus \$2.00 for each mile, measured in tenths of a mile.

Most transportation in the city is done by car. There are two major freeways passing through the city limits, the 98 to the north and 30A nearer the coastline. The 30A, referred to outside of the city as "Scenic 30A" because of its outstanding views of the Gulf and the various beaches along the Florida Panhandle, passes along the waterfront and is called Shore Boulevard within the city limits.

In many ways, however, Vibora Bay is a city designed for pedestrians, with its spacious sidewalks, outdoor cafes, and extensive greenery. There are several areas where cars are off limits, including along the central Waterfront and within parts of the Tangles (where many of the smaller streets are still paved with cobblestones). The Tangles are notorious among tourists (and even locals, though they're usually loathe to admit it) for their confusing, twisting layout of alleys, side streets, and switchbacks that seem custom-designed to cause visitors to lose their way.

Continued from last page

various filigrees and exotic motifs of people, animals, plants, or geometric patterns. He was impressed by the technological breakthroughs of his later years, to the point of fetishizing them; some of his pieces prominently feature trains, automobiles, telephones, and other representations of the marvels of the age. He also loved oversized representations of the human form, as in the enormous statues that line the entrance to the original Union Station building, each holding a "ball of light" that illuminates the entire front exterior stairs.

Even today Viboran architects continue to largely follow Hand's ideas of design. Locals and tourists alike tend to find the city's "eclectic" skyline charming and attractive, though some more conservative critics deride it as inelegant and occasionally tasteless.

Colleges And Universities

Vibora Bay is home to two major colleges, as well as several smaller institutions and vocational schools. The largest and best-known is Sinclair University, which has its primary campus in Far Easton and several other facilities within the city and nearby suburbs. Founded in 1872, Sinclair is a medium-sized and moderately-prestigious liberal arts and sciences college, with about 6,000 full-time undergraduates (plus about 2,500 graduate and post-graduate students). Though its boosters proclaim otherwise, it's slightly sub-Ivy League in quality in most departments, though its Environmental Sciences program is one of the best in the nation.

The other major school in the city is Vibora Bay branch of the University of Florida system. Most of its facilities are in the Hollings Hill neighborhood of Weston, but it also has several outlying branches. UFVB has the state's best medical school, with a state-of-the-art hospital and a world-renowned heart disease research center. The UFVB campus is home to about 5,700 undergraduate and graduate students.

Other local schools include the well-regarded Vibora Bay Culinary Institute, Faraday Community College (a popular destination for Vibora Bay high schoolers who couldn't get into the University of Florida system and want to take remedial classes to raise their chances for a second try), the Vibora Bay Baptist Theological Seminary (one of the largest in

the nation), and Tejada College (which specializes in vocational programs and certifications for medical and dental assistants).

SPRING BREAK!

They come in massive crowds starting every February, peaking in mid-March and finally ending in mid-April. Spring breakers — the term is enough to make some Viborans cheer, and others pack up to leave town for an extended vacation.

The Vibora Bay area is one of the country's premier destinations for college kids on Spring Break looking to blow off steam and party down on some of the world's most beautiful beaches. The city itself doesn't really see the full effect the way places like Daytona do. Since its waterfront is largely commercial, and it makes no particular effort to sell itself to the bronzed hordes, the major problem noticed by locals is increasingly-crowded bars and nightclubs every spring.

In the beach towns and cities around Vibora Bay, it's a different story. The population can more than double in March at the height of the season, and local merchants make sufficient profits to sustain themselves for the rest of the year. This keeps the tradition going even if it annoys some of the locals (many of whom vacate town during March). Panama City, Seagrove, Grayton Beach, and Rosemary Beach are all increasingly popular destination sites. The GM should consider the entertainment value of staging a superpowered battle on a crowded beach filled with hormonally-charged (and frequently inebriated) youngsters, would-be surfers, and beach volleyballers.

ON THE SCENE: VIBORA BAY'S MEDIA

Though in many ways Vibora Bay is an old-fashioned town, it's thoroughly modern when it comes to the media.

Television

America's four major networks are represented in Vibora Bay, as well as several independent channels and of course, a wide variety of programming available by cable from across the world. The city's leading channels are:

WDBY, CHANNEL 4

WDBY is the local affiliate of the Adair Network, the "fourth network" created by Adair Media Enterprises in the early 1990s. AN produces a great deal of "reality programming" and is well-known for pushing the envelopes of taste and decorum on network television. It hasn't caught on very well in Vibora Bay, and despite a decade of effort remains mired in last place in the local ratings.

WGHI, CHANNEL 7

The local affiliate of NBS, America's ratings leader, is locked in a tight race with WTXV (below) for supremacy of Vibora Bay's airwaves. The intense



competition between the two stations, especially for the 6:00 and 11:00 PM news slots, has cost several anchors and managers their jobs over the last few years as the battle for viewers continues.

Living in the Florida Panhandle means being concerned about the weather, and GHJ's weatherman Tom Bonilla is one of the city's leading media celebrities. His easygoing charm and tongue-in-cheek delivery of the daily and weekly forecasts make him a popular and beloved figure. He frequently donates his time to various charities.

WPTK, CHANNEL 10

The local affiliate for CBC, WPTK has been a ratings disappointment locally, as CBC's "family-friendly" and more conservative programming has failed to resonate with many of the Queen City's viewers. The station gets its best ratings when broadcasting the games of the local sports franchises, as much of the city seems to shut down on Sundays in the fall and winter for Hammerheads football.

WSFH, CHANNEL 2

This is the city's leading local independent network, "Where News Comes First." It shows six live half-hour news broadcasts daily, interspersed with some local programming and syndicated re-runs of classic sitcoms.

WTXV, CHANNEL 8

WTXV is the local ABS affiliate. Despite its parent network's woes of the last three seasons, WTXV won the ratings battle in the city in a tight race with WGHJ and the two remain bitter rivals. Station Manager Hyrum Featherstone is always on the lookout for a spectacular story or feature to give his station the edge, and might be willing to risk some sort of criminal activity or the welfare of his reporters to get it.

WUGC, CHANNEL 9

WUGC is the Public Television station. It's part of a small public nonprofit corporation that also owns a couple of radio stations (WVBI and WHPA, below) as well as a number of closed-circuit educational channels that broadcast to local schools. While the station produces several local-interest shows, including the highly regarded *Street Art* that's syndicated around the world, the bulk of its programming comes from national programs and the BBC. Like many public stations, WUGC is struggling to define itself in the modern age of hundreds of cable channels, and always seems to be fundraising.

Radio

Vibora Bay's local radio airwaves boast over 30 FM and 20 AM stations, with a wide array of styles of music as well as news, sports, and "talk" formats. On the FM dial, the most listened to stations include WSRP (99.5), one of the country's foremost jazz stations; WRZT ("Razz 93.7, where Classic Rock lives on!"); WKJP ("Live 107.1, Rap and Hip-Hop in the Queen City"); WLRX ("Easy Listening X 93.1, Easing You Through Your Day"); and WQDT (88.9), which combines classical music with public affairs broadcasting and syndicated talk shows. Both the University of Florida Vibora Bay and Sinclair University have their own radio stations as well.

The leading AM stations include WHPA (610) ("The News and Sports Leader"); WFZA (690) ("La Vida Hispanica en Vibora Bay"); WQND (1040) ("The Voice of Reason in Vibora Bay," talk radio with a somewhat libertarian stance); WPQE (1340) ("Oldies By The Bay," a station specializing in "timeless classics" such as Sinatra); and WVBI (1570) ("Vibora Bay's Radio Home," which features a lot of local programming and makes a point of featuring local musicians with a wide range of styles).

Newspapers

Vibora Bay's main daily newspaper is the *Vibora Bay Banner*. It's published by the Burgard Corporation, a privately held company controlled by Robert Burgard. The corporation owns several smaller papers and three small presses (including Burgard Books, which publishes collections and other work by Banner reporters and columnists, and Black Candle Books, which publishes New Age and occult titles). Originally founded in 1873, the Banner is a fairly liberal and somewhat staid paper that appeals to locals with its "retro" look of thick, blocky headline type and concentration on local news and politics. It has a daily circulation of about half a million copies, increasing slightly for its large Sunday edition.

Burgard himself is an absentee publisher, managing his extended company from his home in Atlanta. The Banner is run by Editor-In-Chief Norman Cooper, an irascible old newspaper man who's been with the paper since 1958. Now approaching retirement, Cooper spends most of his time badgering his reporters about the way things were done back in *his* day and searching for someone with the right amount of love for journalism and the necessary soul for the job of replacing him. Since his standards are both impossibly high and mercurial, no one expects him to retire any time soon.

The Banner is home to a number of popular columnists, including:

- local entertainment/gossip maven Howie Kears, who's approaching 90 but still turns out five columns a week about the local swells and events (usually with a winking description of the various famous and interesting people he's gotten drunk with recently);
- "sports personality" and columnist Frank Wegner, who prides himself on the number of athletes, coaches, and team owners who have threatened him with personal violence after

being on the receiving end of his daily jibes; and

- crusading crime-beat reporter Walt Becker, whose efforts at exposing the criminal activities of underworld figures have placed him in mortal danger on several occasions.

THE LEDGER AND OTHER PAPERS

The Banner's only real competition as a daily paper is the much-smaller *Vibora Bay Ledger*, which has a circulation of about 60,000 copies daily and is constantly on the edge of going out of business (a state it's maintained for almost a decade now). The Ledger has been owned by several pub-

WALT BECKER

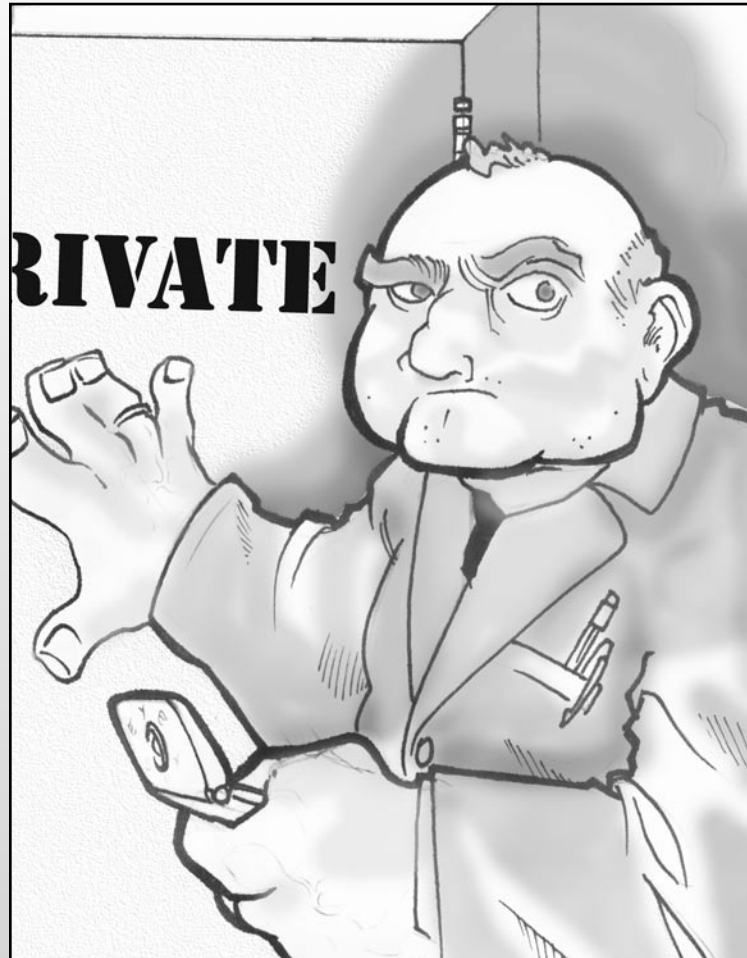
10 STR 8 DEX 8 CON
10 BODY 13 INT 10 EGO
10 PRE 10 COM
2 PD 2 ED 2 SPD
4 REC 20 END 19 STUN

Abilities: Contact: City Controller Earl Jamison 11-; Favor (Police Chief); AK: Vibora Bay 12-; Bureaucratics 12-; Conversation 12-; Deduction 12-; High Society 12-; KS: City Politics 12-; PS: Reporter 13-; PS: Writer 12-; KS: The Underworld 12-; Language: Creole (basic conversation); Streetwise 12-

25+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Nosy (Common, Moderate); Reputation: Pushy Reporter, 11-

Notes: Walt Becker is a heavyset, nondescript man in his mid-40s who dresses in sweat-stained white cotton suits. Although he isn't much to look at, Walt is one of the *Vibora Bay Banner's* top reporters, using his laid-back Southern ways and heavy drawl to put people at ease while he tirelessly pokes around for hints of corruption and crime. He's well-connected, familiar with the city's history and culture, and absolutely impossible to discourage once he gets on the trail of promising story. He's also incurably nosy, walking uninvited into any situation regardless of personal danger. Equally at home sitting on a stoop with teenage hoodlums in Weston or dining with millionaire ward captains in Easton, Becker has a great love of his city that shines through in his prose and has made him a local favorite among the paper's readers.

Becker suspects Guy Sweetland of being at least a high-level mobster, though as yet he's been unable to prove anything substantial. He isn't particularly interested in becoming famous, but he enjoys the danger and challenge of rooting out corruption and crime a bit too much for his own safety. He'd probably be willing to do something ridiculously dangerous to expose a major criminal.



lishing companies over the last forty years, each with a different plan to compete with the beloved Banner, and so far all have failed. The current owner is James Krot, a young and wealthy Viboran who made a great deal of money designing computer software in the 1990s and now is one of the city's leading charitable benefactors (and most eligible bachelors). Under Krot's leadership the Ledger has become younger and hipper in outlook, with a more cynical and biting editorial tone. Where the Banner routinely ignores the weird and mystical events that occur in the city (or at best reports on them dryly and without extraneous comment), the Ledger makes a particular point of lightly mocking mysticism and the paranormal, gleefully reporting the latest news on Skunk Ape sightings or cattle mutilations with a snide tone.

Vibora Bay has several other papers of note, including the Spanish-language *Diario* (which gets most of its national news from wire services but does have a solid focus on the local Hispanic community), the weekly *VB View* (which combines vaguely-liberal activist politics with entertainment news and extensive classified ads), and the *Weston Post*, a weekly tabloid-style paper focusing primarily on the city's African-American population. The *Panama City News Herald*, which maintains its small-town feel, is also available throughout the city; some residents prefer its opinionated local coverage.

ON THE TOWN

Viborans like to have fun as much as anyone else, and their city offers plenty of opportunities for recreation.

Sports

Vibora Bay is home to several professional sports franchises. In the NFL, the Vibora Bay Hammerheads are beloved by the locals despite a history of ineptness. Since the team was founded in 1983, the Hammerheads have not only never been to the Super Bowl, they've in fact had only four winning seasons and have never advanced past the first round of the playoffs. 2003 was no exception, as they finished last in the AFC South once again with a 4-12 record. Nevertheless, they routinely sell out their home games in Hammerhead Stadium, located near the airport at the northwest edge of the city. Diehard fans, who frequently wear foam "Hammer-hats" with wide "fins" jutting out from the sides and tops of their skulls, have high hopes for 2002's top draft pick, wide receiver Jesse Whiten, though the team's best player is probably the cagey veteran linebacker and clubhouse leader Frank Dawes.

The Vibora Bay Copperheads, the city's entry in the NBA, has enjoyed considerably more success over the years, making the playoffs every year in the 1990s and losing in the championship in 1995. In the last few years, as their veteran players aged and their lack of quality draft picks began to expose their weak bench, they've struggled more; in

2004, they snuck into the Eastern Conference playoffs with a 43-39 record but were pasted in three straight in the first round by the eventual champion Millennium City Pistons. The Copperheads play in the ACI Forum, a facility they share with the Vibora Bay Hurricane of the Arena Football League, concerts, conventions and auto shows, and a regulation hockey rink that was built in a failed bid to attract an NHL franchise.

Vibora Bay does not have a Major League baseball franchise, though it has the Vibora Bay Barracudas, a AAA-level International League farm team of the Washington Senators. Joe Hardy Stadium is one of the largest venues in AAA, seating 12,002 baseball fans in Far Easton.

Vibora Bay is also home to some excellent golf courses, mostly at the local resorts in Seagrove and Rosemary Beach. The several annual tournaments held in the area draw some of the PGA's top professionals. As for tennis, the Nar-Cola Open is held every September in the Tennis Center at Walton Palms Park. It's one of the biggest non-Grand Slam tournaments in the world and a major draw that brings in enormous revenue for two weeks. The Tennis Center itself features over twenty courts, and the six main hard courts used in competition seat over 15,000 spectators.





Highbrow Entertainment

Vibora Bay can claim several world-class museums and art galleries. The Vibora Bay Museum of Art, located in Midtown, has a superior collection of Cuban and African craftwork and pre-Columbian pottery, as well as American and European pieces. The VBMA has a working relationship with officials from the Mexican government, so a number of valuable pieces recovered from digs in the Yucatan are on long-term loan as exhibits. Devotees of more modern styles prefer the Duval Modern Art Museum, which has a wide range of exhibits from the twentieth century, including Art Deco, Modern, and Pop Art pieces by well-known artists. Sinclair University's Art Museum is also well-regarded, though smaller, and includes a sizable gallery featuring the work of students and faculty.

For more specialized tastes, the Toshikami Japanese Gardens and Museum in Cluet Farms has a lovely collection of eighteenth and nineteenth century furniture and objects (both Western and Asian), as well as a beautiful walking garden and outdoor café. On the Easton Shore one can visit the Vibora Bay Maritime Museum and see exhibits and displays about the history of shipping on and around the Gulf of Mexico, including several pieces rescued from shipwrecks by Amphibian and other divers. The Union Station Railroad Museum contains a number of refurbished railroad cars and pieces of equipment from the days when the city was a major rail terminal.

The Vibora Bay Symphony Orchestra also has a very strong reputation in the area. Ninety-five musicians strong, it's usually conducted by Gelil Rohde, who was born in Romania and previously led orchestras in Frankfurt and Milan. Symphony Hall is a gorgeous Greek Revival building on the south side of Little Paris that seats over 3,500 patrons on three levels, and like many local buildings includes a small promenade-style park popular with local workers who jog or sun themselves on their lunch hours.

Nightclubs And Bars

Perhaps it's a response to the oppressive heat, or something related to the proximity of the beaches and water, but Viborans naturally seem to have a powerful thirst, and they enjoy slaking it in the company of others. The tourist trap nightspots along Shore Boulevard are well-known but largely avoided by the locals, who generally prefer to do their drinking and socializing in bars and clubs in neighborhoods like Duval, Midtown, or Inner Easton — places with names like Signature, Hurricane Harry's, and Le Gravier. Hotel bars on or near High Street tend to be popular with young businessmen, who spend much of their evenings ordering high-priced martinis while carrying on conversations on their cell phones. The Weston Shore Fish Market also has a large collection of popular local bars and restaurants surrounding it.

THE MINEFIELD

The city's most notorious nightspot is the Minefield, a nightclub in Inner Easton north of the Waterfront. Located in a converted warehouse, the Minefield has two floors. The main floor is a fairly standard nightclub, with a long bar and a stage where some of the city's hippest acts play far too loudly five nights a week. The decor is mostly exposed brick and steel, with the floor open for dancing under minimal lighting and a raised steel platform in the back with about a dozen tables.

For those "in the know" thanks to connections either social or mystical, the *real* party is downstairs (and only accessible through a back entrance). The door is assiduously guarded by Ram, a superhuman who stands over seven feet tall and has massive curved horns protruding from his forehead and curling over his skull to the back of his neck. He takes his security responsibilities seriously, and few are willing to challenge him. Guests who make it past him walk down a series of dark concrete tunnels to a dancehall featuring the very latest in trance, techno, or gothic metal (depending on the night), an excellent bar that can produce any mixed drink no matter how obscure (the ingredients

always seem to be just under the bar out of view of the patrons), and a crowd heavily into bondage gear, piercing and tattooing, and black magic. On some nights, reports say, dark ceremonies and rituals involving demonic summoning take place; others claim the drinks are spiked with a certain mystical "something" that keeps the party going all night long. One thing is certain — when the sun comes up the crowd always leaves exhausted and happy.

The Minefield is owned by Dante Bancroft, who claims to possess "ancient esoteric wisdom" but never seems to demonstrate any mystic powers. He can usually be found at the club after nightfall, dressed in his traditional dark sportsjacket over a black heavy-metal tour shirt and black jeans. He's tall and thin, with shaggy brown hair that falls in his face, and always wears sunglasses, even indoors at night. His accent is strange, sometimes sounding middle-European but at other times veering into East End British. Dozens of unsavory rumors abound about Bancroft, but the only thing anyone can say for sure is that he takes good care of both his patrons and the bands — the Minefield pays the best fees in the area and bands are always clamoring to get booked.

RAM

35 STR 15 DEX
21 CON 21 BODY
10 INT 9 EGO
23 PRE 8 COM
12 PD 9 ED
4 SPD 11 REC
42 END 50 STUN

Abilities: Horns (+3d6 HA, Only With Head Butt Or Move Through), Damage Resistance (8 PD/5 ED), Running 8", +1 PER with all Sense Groups, +3 OCV with Move-Through, CK: Vibora Bay 8-, KS: Vibora Bay's Occult Scene 11-, PS: Nightclub Security 11-, Streetwise 14-

Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Loyal To Minefield's Owners

Notes: Ram stands a hair shy of seven feet tall, and the thick horns that curl back along the top of his head are decorated with small gemstones. He wears a black vest with no shirt (the better to show off his massive, hairy chest) and blousy pants with thick combat boots (carefully constructed for his cloven hooves). He prides himself on his professionalism as a bouncer, and brooks no back-talk from drunken patrons or spoiled celebrities.



BLACK MASK'S CONTACTS

Black Mask has developed several street-level Contacts throughout Vibora Bay. Here's a representative sample — the GM should feel free to create more.

Dr. Erla Davis: A criminal psychiatrist specializing in “abnormal and superhuman psychotics,” Davis works primarily for the Vibora Bay court system as an expert witness. She's interviewed dozens of costumed criminals. In her late fifties, she's approaching retirement and has a bit of a drinking problem, but her insight into the minds of supervillains remains sharp.

Sean Martinez: This sketchy character lives in an apartment on the waterfront, from which he runs several illegal import/export businesses providing locals with quality Cuban cigars, the occasional exotic pet (several of which he himself keeps) and various other illicit items. Black Mask, who doesn't particularly care for his weaselly demeanor or his various money-making schemes, has nevertheless “allowed” him to escape several times in exchange for information he can provide on bigger fish.

Big Mike Petrocelli: This Navy veteran runs an old-fashioned barber-shop in Inner Weston, complete with striped pole, big metal chairs, and containers of blue cleaning fluid full of combs. An incorrigible gossip, he knows a great deal about the latest happenings on the street, as well as a surprising amount about local celebrities and politicians.

THE SUPERHUMAN WORLD

The history of superhumans who have made their homes in Vibora Bay over the years is described in Chapter One. More recently, as the city has grown, it's experienced a remarkable simultaneous growth in the number of superhuman inhabitants. One of the most notable is detailed here; you can find others later in this chapter or in Chapters Four and Six.

BLACK MASK X

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	STR	3	12-	Lift 150 kg; 2½d6 [1]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
18	CON	16	13-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
23	PRE	13	14-	PRE Attack: 4½d6
16	COM	3	12-	
7	PD	4		Total: 15 PD (8 rPD)
6	ED	2		Total: 14 ED (8 rED)
5	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
7	REC	0		
40	END	2		
26	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 119

Movement:	Running:	7"/14"
	Swimming:	3"/6"
	Swinging:	10"/20"

Cost	Powers	END
33	<i>Gas Grenade Pistol:</i> Multipower, 75-point reserve; all slots OAF (-1), Limited Range (12"; -¼)	
3u	1) <i>Knockout Gas:</i> Energy Blast 6d6, Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½), No Normal Defense (Life Support [Self-Contained Breathing or appropriate Immunity]; +1); OAF (-1), 8 Charges (-½), Limited Power (Limited Range: 12"; -¼) [8]	
3u	2) <i>Tear Gas:</i> Energy Blast 3d6, Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½), No Normal Defense (Life Support [Self-Contained Breathing or appropriate Immunity]; +1); OAF (-1), 8 Charges (-½), Limited Range (12"; -¼) plus Sight Group Flash 3d6, Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½), No Normal Defense (Life Support [appropriate Immunity] or airtight protection of the eyes; +1); OAF (-1), 8 Charges (-½), Limited Range (12"; -¼) [8]	
1u	3) <i>Black Smoke:</i> Darkness to Sight Group 3" radius; OAF (-1), 8 Charges (-½), Limited Power (Limited Range: 12"; -¼) [8]	
25	<i>Taser:</i> Energy Blast 8d6, NND (defense is insulated ED; +1); OAF (-1); Limited Range (4"; -¼), 4 Charges (-1) [4]	
11	<i>Throwing Disks:</i> Energy Blast 6d6 (physical); OAF (-1), 8 Charges (-½), Range Based On Strength (-¼) [8]	

Martial Arts: Tae Kwon Do

Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4 Arm Sweep Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4 Disarm	-1	+1	Disarm; 28 STR to Disarm
5 Flying Side Kick	+1	-2	7½d6 Strike
4 Front Kick	+0	+2	5½d6 Strike
5 Roundhouse Kick	-2	+1	7½d6 Strike
3 Takedown	+1	+1	3½d6 Strike; Target Falls
4 +1 Damage Class (already added in)			
4 <i>Air Supply/Rebreather:</i> Life Support (Self-Contained Breathing); OAF (-1), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily replenished, 20 Minutes; -¼) [1cc]			
7 <i>Padded Leather Costume:</i> Armor (5 PD/5 ED); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 14- (-½) 0			
10 <i>Swingline Gun:</i> Multipower, 20-point reserve; all slots OAF (-1)			
1u 1) <i>Swingline And Grapnel:</i> Swinging 10"; OAF (-1), 1 Recoverable Charge (-1¼) [1rc]			
1u 2) <i>Swingline II:</i> Leaping 20"; OAF (-1), Only To Carry User Upward (-½), Cannot Add Leaping from STR (-¼), No Noncombat movement (-¼) 2			
1u 3) <i>Grapnel Attack:</i> RKA 1d6+1; OAF (-1), Limited Range (10'; -¼); 1 Recoverable Charge (-1¼) [1rc]			
1 <i>Strong Swimmer:</i> Swimming +1" (3" total) 1			
4 <i>Earpiece Microphones (Enhanced Hearing):</i> +4 PER with Hearing Group; OAF (-1) 0			
6 <i>Earpiece Microphone And Mask Lens Viewscreen:</i> High Range Radio Perception (Radio Group); OIF (-½), Affected As Sight And Hearing Group As Well As Radio Group (-½) 0			
4 <i>UV Mask Lenses:</i> Ultraviolet Perception (Sight Group); IIF (-¼) 0			
7 <i>Mini-Flashlight:</i> Sight Group Images 1" radius, +4 to PER Rolls; OAF (-1), Only To Create Light (-1), Limited Range (10"; -¼), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily recharged, 1 Hour; -0) [1cc]			
Perks			
30 Contacts: 30 points' worth throughout the city			
5 Money: Well Off			
4 Reputation: the latest in a line of beloved but mysterious crimefighters (in United States) 11-, +2/+2d6			
Talents			
6 Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)			
15 Combat Sense 13-			
3 Lightsleep			
Skills			
10 +1 Overall			
8 +1 with All Combat			
9 +3 with Tae Kwon Do			
6 +2 with Criminology, Forensic Medicine, Paramedics			
9 +3 with Concealment, Shadowing, Stealth			

- 3 Acrobatics 13-
- 3 Acting 14-
- 3 Breakfall 13-
- 3 Bribery 14-
- 3 Bugging 13-
- 7 Bureaucratics 16-
- 3 Climbing 13-
- 3 Combat Driving 13-
- 3 Computer Programming 13-
- 3 Concealment 13-
- 3 Contortionist 13-
- 3 Conversation 14-
- 3 Criminology 13-
- 2 *Crime Scene Kit*: +2 with Criminology; OAF (-1)
- 3 Deduction 13-
- 10 Defense Maneuver I-IV
- 3 Disguise 13-
- 3 Electronics 13-
- 3 Forensic Medicine 13-
- 8 Forgery (Art Objects, Commercial Goods, Documents, Money (Counterfeiting)) 13-
- 2 Gambling (Card Games) 13-
- 3 High Society 14-
- 3 Interrogation 14-
- 2 CK: Chicago 11-
- 5 CK: Vibora Bay 15-
- 3 KS: Organized Crime In Vibora Bay 13-
- 2 KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 11-
- 3 KS: History Of The Black Masks 13-
- 3 KS: American History 13-
- 2 Language: French (fluent conversation; English is Native)
- 1 Language: Spanish (basic conversation)
- 3 Lipreading 13-
- 3 Lockpicking 13-
- 2 *Lockpick Set*: +2 with Lockpicking; OAF (-1)
- 3 Navigation (Land, Marine) 13-
- 3 Paramedics 13-
- 3 PS: Writer 13-
- 3 Security Systems 13-
- 9 Shadowing 16-
- 3 Stealth 13-
- 5 Streetwise 15-
- 3 Tracking 13-
- 3 Trading 13-
- 6 TF: Equines, Large Motorized Boats, Small Motorized Boats, Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles, Water Skiing, Windsurfing
- 4 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Small Arms

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 413

Total Cost: 532

200+ Disadvantages

- 10 DNPC: Dr. David Wulatin (sometime boyfriend) 11- (Normal; Useful Noncombat Position or Skills)
- 10 DNPC: Trinity Haubert (neighbor) 8- (Normal)
- 15 Hunted: Sweetland Mob 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Limited Geographical Area, Harshly Punish)
- 10 Hunted: various members of her rogue's gallery 8- (As Pow, Harshly Punish)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Protects The Innocent And Helpless (Very Common, Strong)

- 15 Psychological Limitation: Code Versus Killing (Common, Strong)
- 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Jennifer Ward) (Frequently, Major)
- 5 Unluck: 1d6
- 232 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 532

Background/History: Jennifer Ward was born in 1970 in Chicago. Her father, David Matthew Ward, was better known to the world as the Black Mask, the ninth man to have borne the famous mantle. Jennifer's mother Christina died in a tragic car accident when Jennifer was only three, leaving Jennifer to be raised by her father with the assistance of his sister Sharon. David, who was a police detective by day while maintaining his secret career as a masked vigilante by night, was heartbroken by the death of his wife and had no interest in remarrying, which led to some question within his inner circle of friends and family as to who would be the next wearer of the Mask. At first David planned to pass it on to Christopher Carr, the descendant of Marvin Carr (Black Mask VI and the only previous wearer not descended from the original), but in his early teens Chris developed multiple sclerosis and eventually required the use of a wheelchair, removing him as a candidate. David considered other, more distant relatives, but none seemed appropriate.

By the early 1980s, Jennifer herself was growing into a healthy, athletic tomboy and a top-notch

Continued from last page

Mark Pogozeleski: A detective from the 11th Precinct, he's exchanged information with Black Mask on cases several times, to their mutual benefit. His boss, Captain Abraham, doesn't care for costumed vigilantes, so he's had to keep his relationship with Black Mask quiet. He's gotten the credit for several collars she actually did most of the work on.





student. She decided she wanted to carry on the family legacy and asked her father to begin training her for the job. At first David resisted — no woman had ever worn the Black Mask before, and having a woman in the job would disrupt the myth that there'd only been one wearer of the Mask, still alive and fighting injustice for over two centuries. What he was unwilling to say out loud, at least at first, was that Jennifer reminded him so much of Christina that he couldn't bear the thought of sending her into danger and risking the possibility of losing her as well.

But Jennifer was determined, and when David refused to train her she turned to her grandfather, Jeffrey Ward (Black Mask VIII), who'd retired to the family homestead in Montana. There he maintained The Ranch, the family's secret library and trophy hall. Eventually, David realized she wasn't going to give up and relented, helping complete her training after his own retirement in 1990. (Jeffrey died in 1993, and Chris Carr became the caretaker of The Ranch.)

Although she made her first couple of public appearances in Chicago, Jennifer decided she'd feel more comfortable starting over in a new city. She moved to Vibora Bay in 1994 to begin her career as a costumed adventuress in earnest. Since then, she's firmly established herself as one of the Queen City's foremost protectors, with several high-profile successes and a healthy mutual respect with the various local law enforcement agencies. She also maintains her secret identity as a freelance magazine

writer (under her own name) and horror novelist (under the pen name of "Constance Hagen"). She has shared the secret of her alter-ego with a small number of close confidantes, including her neighbor and best friend Trinity Haubert (a romance novelist) and her occasional boyfriend David Wulatin, a local doctor.

Personality/Motivation: Black Mask feels the weight of the heroic tradition she's inherited very strongly. She's unswervingly devoted to justice and peace, and willingly risks her life to protect an innocent. She takes care to protect the public image of the "franchise," and reveres the memory of her various costumed ancestors. Though it's not her primary focus, she's a strong feminist and makes a point of calling people on sexist behavior around her (or behavior she *thinks* is sexist). She's also aware of her "responsibility" to pass on the tradition to an heir, though she hasn't found anybody she'd consider marrying yet and is in no particular rush.

Quote: "I *love* this city. From up here, at night when the lights reflect off the bay, it's beautiful and peaceful. I intend to keep it that way."

Powers/Tactics: Black Mask is first and foremost an investigator and detective. She has a keen analytical mind and a knack for getting inside the heads of criminals and madmen without losing herself in the process. She frequently feels "over her head" when dealing with superpowered menaces and mystical crises, though that never stops her from

THE BLACK MASKS

See *Champions Universe*, pages 7-9, for the story and writeup of the first Black Mask. For quick reference, here's a chart listing the various Masks by number, real name, active period, and primary area of activity.

	Name (lived)	Active	Locale
I.	John Michael Ward (1749-1810)	1771-1786	Massachusetts and New York
II.	Timothy James Ward (1772-1831)	1797-1818	Boston
III.	Samuel Ellis Ward (1796-1863)	1822-1850	Philadelphia
IV.	Matthew John Ward (1829-1874)	1853-1870	Boston, then mobile and Chicago
V.	James Lee Ward (1850-1876)	1871-1876	Arizona
VI.	Marvin Beckley Carr (1849-1922)	1876-1896	Mobile in the West (Montana)
VII.	Jason Lee Ward (1874-1929)	1896-1929	Chicago and West
VIII.	Jeffrey Layton Ward (1909-1992)	1929-1955	Chicago
IX.	David Matthew Ward (1933-)	1955-1985	Chicago
X.	Jennifer Ward (1970-)	1993-	Vibora Bay

getting involved. Though she has no particular talent for or connection to the occult side of the city, she's certainly encountered enough magic in the last decade to feel comfortable with it. She's by no means a combat monster — she rarely encounters particularly powerful supervillains and her first choice if she did would be to call for help.

In addition to her learned fighting skills (mainly Tae Kwon Do), Black Mask relies on a small arsenal of weapons and useful devices. Foremost among these is her Gas Grenade Pistol, which fires mini-grenades filled with knockout gas, tear gas, or a thick, black smoke. She also carries throwing disks (which she can Bounce off of streets or walls using her CSL with All Combat) and a four-shot taser. Her other gadgets include a linegun (which can function as a weapon in a pinch), a rebreather, a radio and listening gear, and a mini-flashlight.

Campaign Use: Black Mask makes a useful supporting NPC — she has a wide range of Skills but not enough power to steal the stage from a PC group. She knows and gets along with pretty much all of Vibora Bay's other superhuman defenders, making her a logical point to build around should the GM want to actually create a NPC team out of the disparate locals. If the PCs find themselves on the wrong side of the law due to a frame-up or misunderstanding, she might try to bring them in, but she's unorthodox enough in her own methods to be willing to listen to their side of the story and/or pitch in to help.

If you want to make Black Mask tougher, increase her defenses and DCV. You could also give her another weapon or two (such as throwing blades, a multi-setting blaster in the shape of a flintlock pistol, or some glue grenades) or improve her Martial Arts damage and Combat Skill Levels. If she's too competent for your campaign, get rid of at least five or six of her Skills, her Extra Damage Class, and her Taser.

Black Mask is a dangerous and implacable Hunter who takes every opportunity to gather information about an opponent before committing herself to battle. She prefers to choose the time and place of any physical confrontation and takes advantage of the environment if she can, using natural cover and never staying in one place too long.

Appearance: Black Mask is a lovely blonde woman, standing about 5'6" and weighing 115 pounds, with a lean, athletic figure. She wears a skintight catsuit in dark green and black, with a high collar, boots and an oversized belt. Her mask retains the same "paired diamonds" style that her predecessors used, though it's slightly larger.

Other Notable Features Of The Superhuman World

L'Institut Thoth, the Swiss-based parapsychical research think tank, has offices in Far Easton. The local director, Dr. Cesare Vargas, is Thoth's leading expert on magic as a cause and manifestation of superhuman powers, which isn't saying much. The organization has barely scratched the surface in this field, and though Vargas has a wide collection of anecdotes, he has yet to form them into a coherent theory. To this end, he spends a lot of time in the field, interviewing subjects and documenting paranormal events. This has led to some annoyance and resentment on the part of mystic superheroes in the city (several flee if they see him approaching rather than submit to any more of his questions).

The Institute For Human Advancement (IHA) maintains a small office in the Financial District from which it coordinates its fundraising and recruitment efforts in Florida, Georgia, and Alabama. The local director is Charles Bourne, a true believer in the potential threat of mutants and other superhumans eventually taking over the world and making "ordinary people like you and me" into slaves. He spends a lot of time sending out press releases and giving interviews whenever violence involving superhumans breaks out. Though it's a small operation, Bourne's office is well-funded, well-informed, and persistent.

There continue to be rumors that the Arena (*Champions Universe*, page 53-54) is active somewhere in Vibora Bay, and is run either by the Sweetland Mob, VIPER, or some other similarly shady organization. If this is so, it's thoroughly escaped the notice of local law enforcement, which is dismissive of the whole idea.

THE MYSTIC WORLD

Vibora Bay has become one of the centers of mystical activity in the Champions Universe over the last few decades.

DR. KA				
Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
25	STR	15	14-	Lift 800 kg; 5d6 [2]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
23	CON	26	14-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
23	EGO	26	14-	ECV: 8
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
16	COM	3	12-	
12	PD	7		Total: 25 PD (13 rPD)
10	ED	5		Total: 23 ED (13 rED)
5	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
10	REC	0		
46	END	0		
37	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 159

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost	Powers	END
35	<i>Menat Of Favor</i> : Multipower, 61-point reserve; all slots OIF (necklace; -½), Incantations (-¼)	
3u	1) <i>Shield Of The Gods</i> : Force Field (10 PD/10 ED/10 Mental Defense/10 Power Defense), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF (-½), Incantations (-¼)	0
3u	2) <i>Restoring The Life Flow</i> : Healing Characteristics 3d6, Can Heal Limbs, any Characteristic below starting value one at a time (+¼), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF (-½), Incantations (-¼)	0
6	<i>Ram-Headed Mace</i> : HA +3d6; OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)	1
27	<i>Horus's Legacy</i> : Elemental Control, 55-point powers	
35	1) <i>Blinding Light Of Ra</i> : Sight Group Flash 8d6, Area Of Effect (9" Cone; +1); No Range (-½)	8
32	2) <i>Unbearable Gaze Of Ra</i> : Darkness to Sight Group 4" radius, Personal Immunity (+¼), Variable Special Effects (blinding light or mystical shadow; +¼)	6
13	3) <i>Illumination</i> : Sight Group Images, +4 to PER Rolls, Increased Size (16" radius; +1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Only To Create Light (-1)	2
32	4) <i>Stepping Through Shadows</i> : Teleportation 20", Safe Blind Teleport (+¼), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Only Through Darkness/Shadows (-0)	2
40	<i>Stepping Through Shadows</i> : MegaScale (1" = 100 km, can scale down to 1" = 1 km; +1) for Teleportation 20"	4
3	<i>Armband Of Truth</i> : Detect Lies 16- (no Sense Group); OAF (-1)	0
294	<i>Releasing The Ka</i> : Duplication (creates 729-point Duplicate), Altered Duplicates (100%; +1); Extra Time (Full Phase to	

	activate; -¼), Feedback (-1)	0
7	<i>Bond Of Ka</i> : Mind Link (with Duplicate), No LOS Required; Only With Others Who Have Mind Link (-1)	0

Perks		
3	Contact: Bes (Contact has significant Contacts of his own, Contact has useful Skills or resources) 8-	
20	Contact: 20 points' worth in Vibora Bay and the Mystic World	
5	Money: Well Off	

Talents		
6	Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)	

Skills		
16	+2 with All Combat	
2	Animal Handler (Birds) 14-	
3	Concealment 13-	
3	AK: Middle East 13-	
2	CK: Vibora Bay 11-	
3	KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 13-	
3	KS: Egyptian Gods, Religion, And Legends 13-	
3	KS: Egyptian History 13-	
9	KS: Egyptian Magic 19-	
3	KS: Extradimensional Beings And Menaces 13-	
4	Language: Ancient Egyptian (idiomatic; Arabic is Native)	
2	Language: English (fluent conversation)	
2	Language: French (fluent conversation)	
3	Oratory 14-	
3	Stealth 13-	
3	Streetwise 14-	
2	Survival (Desert) 13-	
2	WF: Common Melee Weapons	

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 632
Total Cost: 791

200+ Disadvantages		
20	Dependent NPC: foster parents 8- (Incompetent; Group DNPC: x2 DNPCs)	
5	Distinctive Features: Always dresses in pseudo-Egyptian robes (Easily Concealed; Noticed and Recognizable)	
10	Hunted: followers of Serpentine's cult 8- (Less Pow, Harshly Punish)	
20	Hunted: Cirque Sinister 8- (Mo Pow, Harshly Punish)	
20	Psychological Limitation: Determined To Protect Mortal World From Further Divine Interference (Common, Total)	
10	Psychological Limitation: Wants To Eradicate His Father's Organization (Uncommon, Strong)	
10	Psychological Limitation: Enjoys Material Luxuries (Common, Moderate)	
15	Social Limitation: Public Identity (Khalid Harris) (Frequently, Major)	
481	Experience Points	

Total Disadvantage Points: 791

Background/History: Khalid Harris, better known to the people of Vibora Bay as the mysterious Dr. Ka, comes from a long tradition of mystical superheroes. His grandfather was the legendary Golden Age hero Dr. Twilight, the costumed protector of Harlem and founding member of the Defenders of Justice. Dr. Twilight, whose real name was Robert MacDonald, was a young mulatto medical student in 1938 when, on a visit to Egypt, he found himself separated from his tour group and got lost inside a maze of secret passages within one of the smaller pyramids of Giza. There he was contacted by the ancient Egyptian god Osiris, who gave Robert powers of light and darkness and made him his champion on Earth, or so he claimed. (Osiris and the other Egyptian gods live in a dimension called Ma'at, which mystics believe is simply a part of the realm of Faerie. See *The Mystic World*, page 19.)

Osiris's actual plan was to create a champion whose services would be needed many years in the future. The prophecies of Thoth, god of wisdom, suggested that Osiris's ancient enemy Set, the serpent god of evil, would himself have a champion who would destroy the world if Osiris's own could not stop him. Osiris secretly placed a portion of his own godly energy into MacDonald's body so MacDonald's own children would themselves be partially divine. MacDonald receiving superpowers himself was simply an unforeseen side effect of Osiris's plan.

In his identity as Dr. Twilight, MacDonald was one of America's leading superheroes before and during World War II. (Since his costume covered his entire face, no one knew his actual race, though rumors that he was colored circulated constantly.) Immediately after the war, Robert's wife Jenna became pregnant. To facilitate the birth, the Egyptian dwarf-god Bes, protector of children, took on human form and came to live with the MacDonalds, putting a great strain on their marriage. Realizing the nature of the impending birth, human mystics and gods alike began to choose up sides in an occult struggle over the child's eventual fate, climaxing in a massive battle between the Defenders, several other mystics, and a group of Set-worshipping cultists while Jenna gave birth to twin boys. Though the heroes eventually drove the cultists away, they were unable to prevent the dark god himself from "touching" one of the boys (though no one knew until much later which one bore Set's hidden mark).

MacDonald's children at first seemed normal, and for a while Robert and Jenna reconciled and stayed together out of their mutual love for them. However, over the next few years, Robert's own problems increased. A disagreement with Meteor-Man and Streak over appropriate levels of violence led him to quit the Defenders Of Justice, and Bulletproof, his closest friend and fellow New Yorker, disappeared a few weeks later. In 1950, investigators working for the FBI discovered both MacDonald's secret identity and a dalliance he'd had with the American Communist Party back in the early 1930s, the revelation of which destroyed his career

as a crimefighter. Jenna and Robert separated in 1952, and in 1954 Robert himself disappeared.

Jenna continued to raise the boys, Gerald and John, thanks to Robert's pension from Harlem Mercy Hospital and a fund in their name set up by several members of the Defenders Of Justice. She made every effort to keep the children out of the public spotlight. On their thirteenth birthday in 1959, Osiris appeared to them, explaining the truth behind their births and that the time had come for them to pass into the realm of Ma'at to receive their training. Though Jenna protested, the children realized the truth of Osiris's claim and agreed to join him.

In Ma'at, both boys were trained in the full range of Egyptian mystical tradition. Before long, however, John's outlook became twisted, and he began to study foul magics in secret. It eventually became known that he bore the Mark of Set, and he escaped into another dimension, where he continued his dark education and prepared to serve as Set's own champion on Earth. Several years later, he manifested on Earth for the first time as Serpentine, leader of a Set-worshipping cult, and attempted to cause a war between the United States and Russia as part of his master plan to spread chaos and fear. Gerald took on the name of Dr. Scarab, with a costume reminiscent of his father's, to oppose him, and became one of the most well-known heroes of the 1960s and 1970s.

In 1973, Serpentine took a bride from among his cult and she gave him a son, Khalid. Khalid was taken to a small estate in Pennsylvania that the cult owned, where he was raised and prepared





to become his father's champion and join him in ruling the world in Set's name. But in 1977, Dr. Scarab and Serpentine had their final battle, Serpentine died, Set's plot was smashed, and Dr. Scarab rescued the young Khalid from the fleeing cultists. Realizing he was unable to raise his nephew himself, he placed the child with a kind foster family, the Harrises.

Khalid lived with the Harrises until 1986, when Osiris appeared to him as he had to his father and uncle. The god explaining Khalid was the son of Serpentine and the nephew of Dr. Scarab, and that he carried the spark of divinity that would allow him to wield powerful magics. Despite some misgivings (not to mention emotional turmoil over revelation of his father's identity), Khalid agreed to travel to Ma'at. There he studied magic with Thoth, the god of knowledge and wisdom. Thoth taught him the technique of separating his *ka*, or spirit, from his body, and Khalid became a master at doing so.

Eventually Khalid became frustrated with Osiris's machinations, especially when he heard of Dr. Scarab's death at the hands of the Archlich Takofanes in 1994. Frustrated that the gods had not helped one of their own in that fateful battle, he refused to have anything more to do with them and abandoned Ma'at forever. He moved to Vibora Bay from Pennsylvania that year, adopted the name Dr. Ka, and became a mystical superhero with a particular drive to protect ordinary humans from the meddlings of the divine.

Personality/Motivation: Dr. Ka has taken on the role of protecting ordinary humans from the machinations and schemes of inhuman beings, whether they be "gods," demons, or any other outside intelligence. At least part of this motivation stems from his anger at the way the Egyptian gods have manipulated his own family over the last few decades. He's chosen Vibora Bay in particular because he has a limited awareness of the prophecies surrounding the place — though he doesn't know much about the nature of the "great battle" that's to be fought here, he assumes whoever put the prophecy in place cared little for what would happen to the innocent human bystanders, and he's determined to protect them from that sort of callousness.

Near-obsession aside, Ka remains a powerful force on the side of good. He spends some of his "spare time" tracking down the surviving remnant's of his father's organization, but by now believes he's gotten the most dangerous of them and the remainder are comparatively harmless cranks. He sometimes involves himself when other menaces, mystical or not, endanger his city — he's worked with Black Mask on a couple of occasions and considers her a worthy ally, and gets along surprisingly well with Robert Caliburn. He maintains a luxurious brownstone in Inner Easton, which he's furnished with many *objets d'art* he inherited from both his father and uncle.

Quote: "These people are under my protection, and I'll not allow them to be used as puppets in your shadow play!"

Powers/Tactics: Dr. Ka's powers come from three sources: his "divine" heritage, which has given him an impressive physique and powers over light and darkness; his training in astral projection at the hands of Thoth; and the mystical devices he inherited from his father, such as his Menat Of Favor

(a necklace that helps protect him from harm and heals injuries) and his Armband Of Truth, which glows when a lie is told in his presence. (His mace is not magical, simply finely-crafted.)

Tactically Ka doesn't show much subtlety yet. He prefers to teleport through shadows to get close to a target, then wade in with his mace. Against tougher opponents or when it seems useful, he projects his *ka*, which can then either travel around surreptitiously gathering information or unleash its mental attacks while invisible.

Campaign Use: Dr. Ka is the flashiest of the various mystics in Vibora Bay, and should easily fit into most traditional superheroic settings. His backstory is deeply entwined with the history of the Champions Universe, and PCs with their own connections to the Golden or Silver Ages should have plenty of opportunity to interact with Ka and detail their interrelationships.

If you want to make Ka more powerful, emphasize his spirit projection powers. Maybe when he's not Duplicated he can project his spirit to accomplish other effects (such as Mind Control or Telekinesis), or he can harness his own spiritual/life force "energy" for various effects. You could also give him more enchanted items, or even a small Variable Power Pool for Thaumaturgy (comic book-style magic). To weaken him, reduce his Characteristics (making him more of a traditional physically ordinary mystic) and decrease the strength of his EC.

Dr. Ka rarely Hunts anyone. He's more of a defender, waiting for problems to arise so he can deal with them. If he felt it necessary to Hunt someone, he'd use his *ka* to conduct reconnaissance, then attack at the most opportune moment.

Appearance: Dr. Ka is a heavily-muscled man, with dark skin and shoulder-length straight black hair. His chest is bare, but he wears an Arabian-style cape of green and gold, and dark green pants and boots. He wears a golden armband around one muscular arm, and carries a golden mace with a ram's head.

DR. KA'S ASTRAL SELF

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
25	STR	15	14-	Lift 800 kg; 5d6 [2]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
23	CON	26	14-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
23	EGO	26	14-	ECV: 8
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
16	COM	3	12-	
12	PD	7		Total: 17 PD (5 rPD)
10	ED	5		Total: 15 ED (5 rED)
5	SPD	20		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
10	REC	0		
46	END	0		
37	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 159

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Flight: 20"/80"

Cost	Powers	END
60	<i>Psychic Attacks:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve	
6u	1) <i>Mental Assault I:</i> Ego Attack 4d6, Fully Invisible (+½)	6
6u	2) <i>Mental Assault II:</i> Ego Attack 6d6	6
6u	3) <i>Mental Domination:</i> Mind Control 12d6	6
6u	4) <i>Mindreading:</i> Telepathy 8d6, Fully Invisible (+½)	6
80	<i>Astral Body:</i> Desolidification (affected by magic), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½)	0
33	<i>Astral Body:</i> Affects Physical World (+2) for 25 STR; Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½)	10
80	<i>Astral Transparency:</i> Invisibility to Sight, Hearing, and Taste/Smell Groups, No Fringe, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½)	0
60	<i>Astral Toughness:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve	
1u	1) <i>Toughness When Intangible:</i> Armor (5 PD/5 ED)	0
6u	2) <i>Toughness When Semi-Tangible:</i> Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50%	0
45	<i>Astral Form:</i> Life Support (Total)	0
45	<i>Astral Gliding:</i> Flight 20", x4 Noncombat	4
35	<i>Passing The Doors of Reality:</i> Extra-Dimensional Movement (to the Quaternions Realms, any location)	3
7	<i>Bond Of Ka:</i> Mind Link (with original self), No LOS Required; Only With Others Who Have Mind Link (-1)	0

Perks

3	Contact: Bes (Contact has significant Contacts of his own, Contact has useful Skills or resources) 8-
20	Contact: 20 points' worth in Vibora Bay and the Mystic World

Skills

16	+2 with All Combat
3	+1 with Astral Gliding
2	Animal Handler (Birds) 14-
3	Concealment 13-
3	AK: Middle East 13-
2	AK: Vibora Bay 11-
3	KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 13-
9	KS: Egyptian Magic 19-
3	KS: Egyptian Gods, Religion, And Legends 13-
3	KS: Egyptian History 13-
3	KS: Extradimensional Beings And Menaces 13-
4	Language: Ancient Egyptian (idiomatic; Arabic is Native)
2	Language: English (fluent conversation)
2	Language: French (fluent conversation)
3	Oratory 14-
3	Stealth 13-
3	Streetwise 14-
2	Survival (Desert) 13-
2	WF: Common Melee Weapons

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 570

Total Cost: 729**200+ Disadvantages**

- 20 Dependent NPC: foster Parents 8- (Incompetent; Group DNPC: x2 DNPCs)
- 10 Hunted: Followers of Serpentine's Cult 8- (Less Pow, PC has a Public ID or is otherwise very easy to find, Harshly Punish)
- 20 Hunted: Cirque Sinister, 8- (Mo Pow, PC has a Public ID or is otherwise very easy to find, Harshly Punish)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Determined To Protect Mortal World from Divine Interference (Common, Total)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Wants To Eradicate His Father's Organization (Uncommon, Strong)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Enjoys Material Luxuries (Common, Moderate)
- 5 Reputation: Mystic From Powerful Family With Divine Connections, 8-
- 15 Social Limitation: Public Identity (Frequently, Major)
- 419 "Experience Points"

Total Disadvantage Points: 729

Lesser Mystics

Here are some of the other mystical inhabitants of the Queen City. They're not known to the general public to have mystic powers (unless noted otherwise below), but characters who know something of the Mystic World may have heard of them (or even have them as Contacts).

Randall Kramm: Kramm is more of a scholar than a true mage, but since his primary fields of research are Atlantis and other ancient lands, he actually knows a great deal about magic, especially the history of its use. A white male in his mid-forties, Kramm maintains a small but well appointed office and rooms in an Easton Tangle brownstone that's filled to overflowing with dusty books, yellowing maps, and odd artifacts. He's written several scholarly treatises on the subjects of prehistorical lands, which are both too esoteric and weird for the mainstream and far too scientifically rigorous for the conspiracy gang. Since Kramm's articles and books make very little money, it's a good thing for him he's independently wealthy; his only major expenses are traveling around the world periodically to track down new bits of information. He's become friendly with Amphibian, who has told him a little about modern-day Atlantis, and has promised to try to get permission for Kramm to actually visit the undersea city, a lifelong dream of his.

Sofia Labat: Sofia is a professional midwife and "birth counselor" who offers her services to expectant parents. She provides herbal treatments to aid with the discomforts of pregnancy, sells charms to ward off morning sickness and evil spirits, and assists in the physical birth at her home in Far Easton. Unknown to her clients, she herself has received a reading from a trustworthy

psychic claiming she will assist at the birth of a great warrior in the near future, and the assistance she provides is apparently fated to determine what side this warrior will fight for. Therefore, she casts a series of blessings over every child she helps bring into the world, wondering each time if this is in fact "the one." She hopes that when she sees the child, she'll know.

Papa Perrault: Most Viborans know "Papa Pay-ro" as a kindly (if irascible) old man who runs a "voodoo shop" in the Weston Tangle. They typically consider him a harmless nut who's taking advantage of the city's reputation to make a quick buck off tourists willing to shell out money for "Authentic Vibora Bay Voodoo Dolls" and "True Gris-Gris Powder." While Papa supports himself well with such nonsense, knowledgeable members of the Mystic World know him as a powerful Voodoo *houngan* of strong convictions, one who opposes evil *houngan-bokors* and advises superheroes on Voodoo-related matters if asked politely.

THE BUSINESS WORLD

From its earliest days Vibora Bay was an important commercial hub through which fruit, vegetables, copper, and timber (all of which spring abundantly from the soil of the Florida Panhandle) traveled outward while farm implements, firearms, textiles, and slaves traveled in from the Caribbean. When Florida became a territory of the United States in 1819, the nature of this trade changed somewhat as railheads snaked down from Georgia, linking the Queen City with the rest of the nation. Thus connected she quickly became a major export center for Southern tobacco, cotton, and cattle while imports from Latin America, such as sugar and bananas, and luxury goods from Europe (transported via Cuba) flooded into her port to be transshipped northwards to hungry urban markets. During the Civil War, Vibora Bay became a major center for Confederate privateers and blockade runners. The most notorious of these was the feared and formidable Captain Raphael Semmes, whose bewhiskered likeness can still be observed in the form of a marble statue outside of the Port Authority Building on Pier 28.

After the Civil War, Vibora Bay quickly re-established itself as a major American port by rebuilding more quickly than many of her would-be competitors along the Gulf of Mexico. Within a year of the city's razing by Burnham's artillery crews, longshoremen were back to working ten-hour days, while import/export clerks were busy insulting one another from their open air storefronts along San Mateo Street. In the 1920s the Queen City was transformed into a major hub for bootlegging by such infamous gangsters as Blackjack Israel Jones and Salvador "The Nose" Sanchez, who ran their fleets of high-speed motorboats up the Gulf Coast from Cuba laden with cheap bathtub rum.

With the rise of the automobile in the early twentieth century, Vibora Bay also became an important hub of the oil industry. Not only was it



a good launching point to send roughnecks out to work the Gulf rigs, it became an important center for storing the oil those rigs drilled, and then shipping it elsewhere.

In the twenty-first century things pretty much remain the way they have always been in Vibora Bay: imports come in, exports go out, and local middlemen find ways to turn a profit by ingratiating themselves into this seemingly eternal global circumambulating of goods. Over the centuries, many corporations and private enterprises involved with manufacturing goods for consumers in Latin America, such as International Microchip and Southern Chemical, have relocated their facilities to the city to save on shipping costs. Likewise, many businesses (such as ACI) involved with importing goods through the Port of Vibora Bay have found it advantageous to establish regional offices there.

Shipping And Transportation

As the description above indicates, the shipping and transportation industries are a major part of the Viboran economy. Some of the major players in this commercial sector include:

ADVANCED CONCEPT INDUSTRIES (ACI)

As one of the largest and most diverse corporations on the globe, ACI maintains branches in many major metropolitan areas. In Vibora Bay, its offices are located in the ACI Building on High Street in the center of the Financial District. Derisively known to critical local residents as “the birdcage” for its unique glass and steel domed construction, the ACI Building houses the regional headquarters for several of the corporation’s subsidiaries, such as Ace Burgers,

the restaurant chain Southern Comfort, and Nar-Cola brand soft drinks. It’s also the international headquarters of ACIImports, the division of the corporation charged with shipping copper, fertilizer, and computers out to Latin American markets in exchange for raw minerals (mainly bauxite mined in Brazil). A variety of other non-ACI related business also rent office space in the building, most notably the infamous law firm of Grady, Stanton, and Hartley (see page 51).

ACIImports is run by Naomi Peterson, a forceful woman in her late 30s who’s known for her hands-on approach to running her business. She’s accompanied everywhere by her bodyguard, personal assistant, and husband Buck Peterson, a former Navy SEAL and University of Florida quarterback. Along with their small legion of assistants they can be found nearly anywhere in Vibora Bay checking on incoming shipments of personal computers from ACI’s South Carolina manufacturing plant at the railyard, overseeing the transfer of bills of lading at the Port Authority, or inspecting maintenance records at ACI’s trucking facility outside of the city limits.

VTRANSIT

Easily recognized throughout Vibora Bay for its distinctive “don’t tread on me” snake symbol, VTransit services the Vibora Bay business community with its fleet of lime green and teal scooters, hatchbacks, covered pickups, and panel trucks. The company provides reliable, low-cost, same-day courier and light trucking services to hundreds of local law firms, accountants, exporters, and graphic designers at remarkably competitive prices. The company’s well-regarded CEO,

Monique Fontaine, is an exquisitely lovely young woman believed by some to harbor political ambitions. If the loyalty shown by her employees is any indication, she'd be a shoe-in if she ever decided to run for the City Council.

DELPHINUS SHIPPING LINES

Currently owned by Pharos Industries but with a history dating back to the mid-nineteenth century, Delphinus Shipping Lines is based out of a large but mostly nondescript warehouse near the Port Authority building on Semmes Avenue. One of the largest shipping companies in the Caribbean, it's responsible for moving millions of tons of goods throughout the region annually. Much like its chief competitor, ACImports, Delphinus transports finished electronic products into Vibora Bay via truck and rail from a manufacturing facility in Arkansas. Its ships then voyage to Trinidad, Puerto Rico, and the Dominican Republic and return with agricultural goods, such as bananas and sugarcane. Delphinus's operations are overseen by Maxwell Smith, a bald, cigar-smoking workaholic in his late 50s.

BLUE FREIGHT

Blue Freight is one of North America's largest trucking companies, with offices in every major metropolitan area in Canada, Mexico, and the United States. To take advantage of the Queen City's status as one of the continent's busiest ports, it maintains a major regional hub for Florida, Georgia, and Alabama in the nearby town of Bruce. Almost a small town unto itself, Transportation Center A7 contains parking for hundreds of trucks, a garage and large maintenance staff, refueling facilities, a parts warehouse, storage warehouses, several four-story office buildings, dozens of forklifts, and overnight accommodations for the company's drivers. Blue Freight A7 has a staff of over 100 people led by regional coordinator Jason "JJ" Jefferson, a handsome, Yale-educated businessman in his mid 40s.

TRANSNATIONAL CONTAINER (TRANSNAT)

The brainchild of eccentric Taiwanese-American multimillionaire Tony Wu, Transnational Container is the Southeast's largest importer of low-cost East Asian goods. It has offices in Hong Kong, Kuala Lumpur, Taipei, Osaka, and Shanghai as well as in Vibora Bay (and other Southeastern cities). It manages its affairs from several locations, the most important of which is a modest two story brick brownstone on San Mateo Street. Although he's developed a reputation for being everywhere at once by constantly flying from city to city on his private jet, local operations are handled by Wu's Dartmouth-educated nephews James and Shawn Wu who, like their uncle, are recent converts to the High Apostolic Church. In fact, the Wu clan has

become one of the church's prime supporters and financiers in recent years, making generous donations and extending zero percentage loans to the church to help expand its facilities.

Unlike most international shipping companies, Transnat is a sole proprietorship. That gives Wu a lot more leeway to indulge in speculation than his competitors. While most import/export companies only ship goods retailers have ordered, Wu, a consummate observer of pop culture trends, attempts to anticipate Asian and American tastes in toys, games, and clothing by importing large quantities of a product *before* it becomes popular so he can be the first to cash in on the newest craze. Transnat maintains several large warehouses in Vibora Bay specifically to house these speculative imports. Although Wu is dead on with his guesses about two-thirds of the time, there have been several noteworthy failures over the years. For example, the Transnat warehouse on Esher Avenue holds ten thousand "Seeker" action figures he hasn't found a buyer for at any price.

Industrial And Manufacturing

With all the shipping going on, it helps to have something to transport. That's where the region's manufacturing and industrial firms come in.

DRAKE-VICTORIA INC.

Defense industry giant Drake-Victoria maintains a small manufacturing and research facility in the Airport Business Park, plus a large and exceptionally well-guarded warehouse near the waterfront. Headed by Dr. Nathan Krames, the research portions of the company's Queen City activity focus on the construction of "boutique" items for NASA at nearby Cape Canaveral. Its warehouse holds large shipments of arms and ammunition destined for Latin America. Drake-Victoria's primary competitor for this market is Vibora Bay-based American Light Arms (ALA), a manufacturer of military and civilian arms whose heavily protected factory is on the western border of Far Weston.

OCEAN OPTICAL

Originally a small partnership dedicated to the creation of scientific equipment for use in deep-sea exploration, Ocean Optical has expanded far beyond its original goals to become a world leader in photonics, cutting edge laser technology, and fiber optic instruments. Its products include miniature fiber optic spectrometers, chemical sensors, and precision light filters. Its research is lead by the father-and-son team of Roy and Alan VonWalt, who operate a laboratory in Inner Easton, near Goldenrod Avenue. It also has a manufacturing facility located nearby in Gainesville.

Oil, Chemicals, And Medical Technology

Not only oil and petrochemicals, but other chemicals and related forms of manufacturing are another important factor in Vibora Bay's economy.

DEW CHEMICAL COMPANY

Since Vibora Bay represents an important export point for fertilizer and a major consumer of pesticide, Millennium City-based Dew Chemical maintains a satellite office in a warehouse near the Port Authority building in Weston Shore. Its major competitor in northern Florida is the Southern Chemical Corporation, which has a fertilizer manufacturing plant near Mobile.

DUCHESS INDUSTRIES

Internationally well-known for its philanthropic endeavors, German megacorporation Duchess Industries has a medical research facility in Vibora Bay. It's supervised by none other than Dr. Edward Warwick, the president and CEO of the corporation's North American division. Kind and selfless to a fault, Dr. Warwick is currently running a series of tests on the area's poorer children to help determine the origins of genetic diseases such as sickle cell anemia. His facility is located next to The Jumble in Inner Weston.

GET 'EM, INC.

Although it isn't a widely discussed fact, one of the Queen City's largest service industries is pest control, which makes perfect sense when you consider that she's cursed with more termites, flying cockroaches, fire ants, spiders, venomous snakes, and man-eating sharks than any other major American municipality. Although it has many competitors, the best-known exterminator in Vibora Bay is Get 'Em Inc., whose large, highly trained, and well-equipped staff is eager to take on even the largest (non-supernatural) pest challenges. The company is entirely owned and operated by Dale Grabble, a nervous, chain-smoking man who seems to have been exposed to a little too much insect repellent. Besides its spacious corporate office in the Financial District, Get 'Em maintains its own pesticide manufacturing plant several miles outside of town near Bruce.

VIBORA PETROLEUM

The sole remaining local oil company not long since bought out by major competitors like Exxon and Royal Dutch Shell, Vibora Petroleum was founded in the early 1930s by William Rhiems, a maverick financier who preserved most of his fortune by pulling out of the stock market right before the 1929 crash. He established a financial empire by taking advantage of his peers' desperation to buy their companies at rock-bottom prices. By providing jobs in a time when there were none, he earned enormous loyalty from his hard-working employees, and to this day the company has a well-deserved reputation for the excellent benefits and working conditions it provides. It suffered some

difficulties in the mid-90s, but the rise of oil prices in the 2000s rescued it; as of 2004 it's considered financially stable. The Rhiems family maintains a controlling interest in the corporation.

Legal And Financial Services

With so much manufacturing and transport going on, it's no surprise that Vibora Bay's business institutions need lots of financial services and legal advice to keep their companies running smoothly and profitably.

USBANK

One of the nation's largest banks, USBank has dozens of branches in and around Vibora Bay as well as a suite of offices in the ACI Building on High Street. Its primary sources of income in the Queen City are lines of credit extended to local import/export businesses, the financing of home improvement loans, and payroll services. A carefully-run and security-minded operation, USBank services the area using a small fleet of its own custom-designed armored cars.

VIBORA BAY CREDIT UNION

Owned and operated by local businessman Bailey George, Vibora Bay Credit Union is a non-profit financial institution dedicated to facilitating home ownership, fostering small businesses through low percentage microloans, and helping senior citizens manage their fixed incomes. A lot of these activities are conducted at a manageable loss; as a social idealist, George is a strong believer in the civilizing effect of giving average people the opportunity to work for themselves, thus making them stakeholders in the community. The credit union's modest offices are on Stonewall Avenue in Walton Bayview.

GRADY, STANTON, AND HARTLEY

Although there many law firms in Vibora Bay that specialize in assisting clients who work the import/export business, none of them has the renown of Grady, Stanton, and Hartley. Staunch defenders of the local business community, GS&H was recently thrown into the spotlight when it successfully defended ACI in a prominent case involving charges of illegal arms shipments to Lugendu. The firm's partners are known for being polite, professional, and forceful.

Other noteworthy Viboran lawyers include Cooper, Capstick, and Rand (who specialize in constitutional and privacy issues) and Syrian-born attorney Esteban Ayoob (who often takes cases that have an occult or paranormal element to them).

Agriculture And Aquaculture

Florida is traditionally a state that emphasizes both agriculture and fishing. These industries remain important to Vibora Bay.

FITZARTHUR PUBLISHING COMPANY

As a publisher of numerous periodicals dedicated to the occult, Manhattan-based Fitzarthur Publishing simply can't afford not have an office in Vibora Bay! Each day dozens of "reporters" fan out from its corporate offices on High Street in search of any material on the strange and the supernatural that they can use to craft articles in sensationalist periodicals like *The Hidden* and *Merlin's*.

Fitzarthur also runs its foreign-language division, Latin American Industries (LAI) out of Vibora Bay. LAI is dedicated to translating best-selling Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror titles into Spanish and Portuguese for export to Latin America.

SOUTHERN AGRICULTURE LLC

Since most of the terrain framed on three sides by Mobile, Vibora Bay, and Tallahassee is rich farmland, it's unsurprising that several large agribusinesses dominate the region. The largest and most prosperous of these is Southern Agriculture, a 150-year-old farming operation owned and operated by the Hendrikson family. With a work force of more than two hundred, it keeps its headquarters in Far Easton (just like its two primary competitors, Stonewall LLC and Blue Diamond Farms).

BATCHCO

The marshy coastal areas of northern Florida have long been a Mecca for anglers of every stripe. But it wasn't until two determined University of Florida School of Agriculture graduate students began buying up cheap swampland near Vibora Bay that it occurred to anyone to try raising fish there. Some 20 years later those two ambitious amateurs, K.P. Anderson and Hope Mills, are the owners of one of the south's most productive commercial fish farming operations. They supply catfish, crayfish, bass, and shrimp to countless seafood restaurants in Vibora Bay, Mobile, and New Orleans.

Small Shops, Cafes, And Retail Stores

Not every business in Vibora Bay is a large corporation or multinational firm. Many of the city's most popular businesses are small, local operations with a distinctively Viboran flavor.

BELLOCHIO

Almost a living lesson in "presentation," Bellochio is a petite store located on a tiny brick-paved alley off of Hardee Avenue in Duval. Run by three

sisters who look as though they could have stepped out of the pages of a children's storybook, the shop specializes in selling hand-dyed ribbons, exotically scented stationary, potpourri, enormous bows, and other such impractical yet intensely feminine bric-a-brac. The store is a favorite of Viboran woman who dress in a distinctive fashion known locally as "Molly Moppet": long, brightly colored and often tightly-curved hair, pancake white face makeup, summer dresses with puffed shoulders, and distinctive black shoes. The sisters pipe a steady stream of French opera onto the street through tiny pink speakers located above their doorway.

VILLAINS

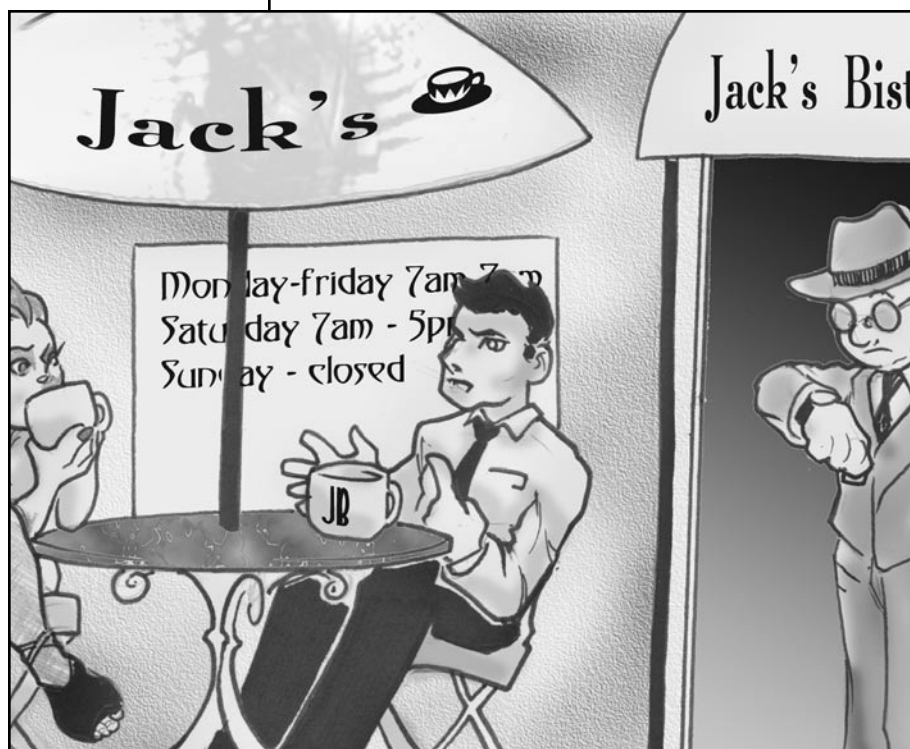
Ever wanted to dress like a supervillain? This Midtown store for the fashion-starved fills the needs of a tiny but growing portion of Vibora Bay's alternative community who feel a compelling desire to publicly adorn themselves like Doctor Destroyer, Istvatha V'han, Stormfront, or some other super-criminal. Most customers mix and match various portions of their favorite criminals' costumes to produce more original (if horrifyingly ugly) outfits by combining knockoffs of Blackstar's science belt with Ankylosaur's shoulder pads and Thunderbird's bodysuit... or some other visually questionable arrangement. These costume items are, of course, harmless junk that doesn't provide any protection or special powers to their wearers. But some of the costumes are such convincing reproductions that it's rumored many actual supervillains shop at the store for mundane accessories to adorn their costumes.

TRIBAL ARTS

Located in an old drugstore in the Weston Tangle, Tribal Arts is the project of compulsive world-traveler and urban witch-doctor Bonobo Jones. A fanatical collector of hand-carved masks, statuary, and wooden furniture from Polynesia, Africa, and Central America, Jones has turned his knowledge of these regions into a profitable business by buying the objects of his passion directly from the Third World artists that create them. After importing them into the country via Vibora Bay, he uses his store as a sort of "retail warehouse" by selling directly to the public while waiting for other buyers throughout the country to place orders. His largest customers are restaurant chains, taverns, and hotels, but direct sales to customers via the World Wide Web and his mail order catalog are becoming increasingly important.

HAPPY BOB'S PAWNSHOP AND LOAN

Located on Nat Turner Street in one of the roughest sections of Inner Weston, Happy Bob's Pawnshop And Loan provides the most basic financial services to down-and-out Viborans. Run by former professional wrestler Robert "Happy Bob" Freeman (who never, ever smiles), the pawnshop cashes checks, provides money orders, and pawns small yet valuable items



such as watches, wedding rings, electric guitars, and handguns. Although nothing has ever been proven, Happy Bob has something of a reputation on the streets as a loan shark, drug dealer, information broker, and police snitch.

THE GARAGE

Although its brick facade isn't adorned with any sign, The Garage is easy to pick out from the other tired looking buildings on its street because of the flame-painted Cooper Mini that hangs from a beam above the front door. More of a cooperative run by Vibora Bay's resident gearheads than a business, The Garage contains dozens of "works in progress" ranging from muscle cars and restoration jobs to choppers. It's just the sort of place gadgeteer superheroes might like to hang out at.

The owner of the building is an old time drag racer named Marty "The Monster" Cruz. Although Marty retired from the racing circuit decades ago, he still enjoys tinkering on projects, especially if it allows him to work with the city's up and coming young mechanics, racers, and customizers. Although it's possible to get your car or bike worked on at The Garage, it's more than likely it will emerge with an outrageous paint job, fins, a nitrous kit, and lifters in addition to fixing whatever was originally wrong with it.

A DIRTY, POORLY LIT PLACE FOR BOOKS

Every major city has one: a dauntingly enormous used bookstore filled with thousands upon thousands of decaying tomes, its rotting inventory so vast that there's no way its aging, half-crazed hippie proprietor could possibly know exactly what he has in stock. In Vibora Bay's case, he doesn't even try. Veteran occultist, activist, and all around hipster Warbaby Krames has been buying used books from, and selling them back to, the city's inhabitants for a quarter of a century. There's no pretense of order in his ironically-named establishment, which riffs on Hemingway's famous short story. Everything from Korans to cookbooks to Kama Sutas are stacked wildly on shelves, stored in stacks of old blue plastic milk crates and cardboard boxes, or dumped in piles on the floor. Rats the size of housecats occasionally scamper between the rows, squeaking angrily at customers.

In spite of these obvious inconveniences, A Dirty, Poorly Lit Place For Books enjoys an excellent reputation amongst the City's bibliophiles and occultists as the place to shop for obscure (or possibly previously nonexistent) librams of ancient lore, spellbooks, college treatises on demon summoning, rare '70s paperbacks on alien intelligence, and holy texts of religions with unpronounceable names. At least four different previously unknown versions of the *Book Of Thoth* reputedly have been found there, and a few hopeful biblio-explorers are convinced the fabled *Krypticon* lurks somewhere amid the milk crates. Whether any of these rumors are true or simply local gossip,

Warbaby isn't saying, but one thing is for certain: a real bibliophile can become lost for hours wandering amongst the discarded literary paraphernalia of a century.

CAFÉ EL CHUPACABRA

Located on the street level of an office building in the downtown, the Café El Chupacabra is a lively establishment with a Latin American feel as well as a creepy decor: its walls are adorned with various artists' depictions of the legendary blood-drinking monster that's been terrorizing Central America for decades. Besides this rather disturbing flourish, however, the café is a normal upscale bistro that serves coffee, tea, chai (a spiced milk drink), and hot chocolate as well as a variety of bagels and pastries. Its mismatched collection of heavy wooden furniture spills out into a metal corral on the sidewalk so customers can sit outside should they wish to do so.

THE MARTIAL WORLD

Like many large cities, Vibora Bay supports a thriving martial arts subculture (though that subculture isn't as large or well-developed as those in, say, New York City, San Francisco, or Los Angeles). It draws practitioners from all walks of life, from young turks seeking skill in personal combat, to professional women learning self-defense, to aging folk in search of exercise and companionship. Vibora Bay's martial arts scene lacks most of the fierce interdisciplinary rivalry characteristically found in other cities. There are exceptions, but heated conflicts between dojos or schools are rarely seen.

Major styles such as Karate, Kung Fu, Aikido, Jujutsu, and Tae Kwon Do are all well represented in the city, and several less common styles have devotees as well. Many suburbs like Freeport and Rock Hill sport strip-mall dojos aimed primarily at



giving children exercise and bragging rights. Featuring no recognizable style — no matter what the owners choose to call them — these places are dismissively labeled “McDojo’s” by purists. These aside, several masters do have schools in the Queen City, including aikidoka Kosuge Sadako, Shotokan karateka Miyajima Yoshio, Kenpo karateka Jeff Bolding, jujutsuka Koshiro Hansen, sifu Ying Jizhong (Jason Ying), capoeirista Armando DeLaCruz, Tae Kwon Do master Pan-yong Park, and Tai Ch’i Ch’uan master Hsu Haixia. Vibora Bay even boasts its own “native” style, known as *Vibora Carmesi* (from the Spanish for “crimson viper”).

Vibora Carmesi

Though it’s not an offshoot of any other specific style, martial arts experts claim Vibora Carmesi resembles a bastardized blend of Shaolin Snake style Kung Fu, Capoeira, Yang style Tai Ch’i Ch’uan, and down-and-dirty dockside brawling. Practitioners of Vibora Carmesi (known as *seguidores de la vibora* — “followers of the viper” — or just *seguidores* for short) wryly interpret this to be the experts’ way of saying the style is actually original without openly admitting such a thing.

Vibora Carmesi takes its core forms from the swaying, coiling, and striking of snakes. Hand strikes tend to be fast and keep the fingers rigidly pointed. Maneuvers based on the feet favor acrobatic undulations and striking from unexpected angles. Evasive and grappling maneuvers mimic the serpent’s fluid motions.

Since it has no clearly identifiable pedigree, the specific roots of Vibora Carmesi cannot be definitively traced. It seems to have grown organically along with the city’s growth. Some claim the style began in the 1870s with Alexander Davis, a widely-traveled former slave and wild character suspected of practicing the dark arts and known to enjoy wine, women, and trouble. *Seguidores* generally dismiss this idea however, considering it a melodramatic attempt to graft a colorful historical figure onto the tradition.

The renowned Elijah Selkirk, considered by many the greatest *seguidore* in history, founded Vibora Bay’s oldest school of the art, *La Jerarquia de Viboras* (“the nest of vipers”) in 1913. Today, Domingo Vergari, the prize pupil of Selkirk’s later years, upholds the tradition as master at the venerable school, which is located in Inner Easton. Although age has slowed and weakened him, Vergari’s knowledge and wisdom cause even the most jaded *seguidores* to pay heed to his teachings. In terms of fighting ability, Vibora Carmesi’s greatest living *seguidore de la vibora* is the superhero Redsnake.

REDSNAKE				
Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
25	STR	15	14-	Lift 800 kg; 5d6 [2]
26	DEX	48	14-	OCV: 9 /DCV: 9
23	CON	26	14-	
13	BODY	6	12-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll 14-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
18	PRE	8	13-	PRE Attack: 3½d6
14	COM	2	12-	
11	PD	6		Total: 18 PD (13 rPD)
12	ED	7		Total: 19 ED (13 rED)
6	SPD	24		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
10	REC	0		
46	END	0		
38	STUN	0		
				Total Characteristic Cost: 163

Movement:	Running:	9”/18”
	Leaping:	5”/10”
	Swimming:	2”/4”

Cost	Powers	END		
	<i>Martial Arts: Vibora Carmesi</i>			
	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
3	<i>Abrigo Aldredor</i>	-1	-1	Grab Two Limbs, 55 STR for holding on
3	<i>Arrastre Bajo Pie</i>	+1	+1	9d6 Strike; Target Falls
4	<i>Estrangule la Presa</i>	-2	+0	Grab One Limb; 4d6 NND
4	<i>Mordedura Dolorosa</i>	-1	+1	4d6 NND
4	<i>Mordedura Estrategica</i>	-1	+1	Disarm; 55 STR to Disarm
5	<i>Mordedura Hambrienta</i>	+1	+3	9d6 Strike
4	<i>Mordedura Mortal</i>	-2	+0	HKA 2D6
5	<i>Mordedura que se Sacude</i>	-2	+1	13d6 Strike
4	<i>Ondas</i>	+0	+0	60 STR vs. Grabs
4	<i>Sacudimiento</i>	—	+5	Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort
4	<i>Sacudimiento Cuidadoso</i>	+2	+2	Block, Abort
16	+4 Extra Damage Classes (already added in)			
1	Use Art with Whip			
30	<i>Hypnotic Sway:</i> Entangle 3d6, 3 DEF, Based On EGO Combat Value (Mental Defense applies; +1), Works Against EGO, Not STR (+¼), Takes No Damage From Physical Attacks (+¼), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Eye Contact Required (-½), Restrainable (-½), Stops Working If Mentalist Is Stunned (-½), Cannot Form Barriers (-¼)			
28	<i>Energy Whip:</i> Multipower, 57-point reserve, all OAF (-1)			
3u	1) <i>Energy Discharge:</i> Energy Blast 11d6; OAF (-1)			
1u	2) <i>Muscular Dampening Field:</i> Suppress STR 7d6; OAF (-1), No Range (-½)			

- 1u 3) *Whip's Reach*: Stretching 3", Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1), No Noncombat Stretching (-¼), No Velocity Damage (-¼) 0
- 6 *Power Pack For Energy Whip*: Endurance Reserve (75 END); OAF (-1) **plus** Endurance Reserve (5 REC); OAF (-1), Limited Recovery (must be connected to electrical power source; -¼) 0
- 8 *Protective Costume*: Armor (4 PD/4 ED); OIF (-½) 0
- 6 *Magically-Toughened Skin*: Damage Resistance (6 PD/6 ED) 0
- 6 *Disciplined Mind*: Mental Defense (10 points total) 0
- 6 *Fast*: Running +3" (9" total) 1
- 6 *Naturally Alert*: +2 PER with all Sense Groups 0

Perks

- 9 Contact: "Wired" Wendy MacDougal (Contact has very useful Skills or resources, Very Good relationship with Contact) 14-
- 3 Contact: Bill Brannon (Contact has access to major institutions) 11-
- 10 Money: Wealthy
- 4 Reputation: Respected superhero (Vibora Bay) 14-, +2/+2d6
- 4 Reputation: World's most powerful practitioner of Vibora Carmesi (the Martial World) 14-, +2/+2d6

Talents

- 6 Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)
- 15 Combat Sense 12-
- 4 Double Jointed
- 3 Lightsleep

Skills

- 10 +2 with HTH Combat
- 9 +3 with Vibora Carmesi
- 3 Acrobatics 14-
- 3 Analyze Style 12-
- 2 Animal Handler (Reptiles & Amphibians) 13-
- 3 Breakfall 14-
- 3 Climbing 14-
- 3 Contortionist 14-
- 10 Defense Maneuver IV
- 1 High Society 8-
- 2 CK: Vibora Bay 11-
- 3 KS: The Martial World 12-
- 2 KS: The Superhuman World 11-
- 2 KS: Vibora Bay Cults 11-
- 2 KS: Vibora Bay Underworld 11-
- 2 KS: Vibora Bay's Wealthy Elite 11-
- 5 KS: Vibora Carmesi 14-
- 3 Language: Spanish (completely fluent; English is Native)
- 3 Paramedics 12-
- 3 Shadowing 12-
- 3 Stealth 14-
- 3 Streetwise 13-
- 3 Tactics 12-
- 2 WF: Chain & Rope Weapons, Whips

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 305**Total Cost: 468****200+ Disadvantages**

- 5 Dependent NPC: Domingo Vergari (Vibora Carmesi master) 8- (Slightly Less Powerful than the PC)
- 10 Distinctive Features: Style (Not Concealable; Noticed and Recognizable; Detectable By Large Group)
- 20 Hunted: Vibora Bay organized crime group 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Harshly Punish)
- 15 Hunted: VIPER's Red Nest 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Limited Geographical Area, Harshly Punish)
- 10 Hunted: VBPD 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Honorable (Common, Total)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Protective Of Innocents (Very Common, Strong)
- 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Santo Barrera) (Frequently, Major)
- 10 Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Cold attacks (Uncommon)
- 10 Vulnerability: 2 x BODY from Cold attacks (Uncommon)
- 133 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 468

Background/History: Santo Barrera enjoyed all the benefits of a wealthy childhood. His parents, while not exactly spoiling him, certainly left him wanting for nothing. They encouraged his interests, even when those interests changed from week to week,



as the dreams of youngsters often do. When dinosaurs fascinated him, his parents took him to museums. When he admired astronauts, they sent him to Space Camp. When he decided music was his calling, they hired a piano teacher. And when his grades suffered from too many outside activities, they brought in tutors. If Santo loved it, his doting parents encouraged it.

Until he discovered Vibora Carmesi. The Barrera family simply didn't involve itself in some pursuits, they explained again and again. Common ruffians brawled and kicked and threw each other down; cultured young men played golf for exercise and retained bodyguards for protection. So, in the manner of obedient sons throughout history, Santo

continued studying martial arts in secret.

A plane crash orphaned Santo the day after his eighteenth birthday. He inherited the family fortune and the responsibilities accompanying it. More than ever, Santo buried himself in Vibora Carmesi, seeking solace there in chaotic times. Soon he was studying with master Domingo Vergari himself.

Vergari understood young Santo's need to focus on something and pushed his training as far as it could go. That turned out to be quite far indeed, as Santo showed an aptitude not seen since Vergari's own glory days.

While rising through the ranks at *La Jerarquía de Viboras*, Santo also began to realize how sheltered his upbringing had been. Crime, despair, poverty, and injustice confronted thousands of Viborans every day, and those fortunate few blessed with plenty seemingly did nothing to help. As his eyes opened, his heart sank. Former family friends, pampered and privileged, now disgusted him. He thought none too highly of himself, either — here he was, free to pursue his passion instead of breaking his back in honest toil, while elsewhere in the city women working three jobs just to feed their children suffered. Once he was proud of his family's position; now it shamed him.

When Vergari could no longer stomach listening to this hand-wringing, he sat Santo down. It wasn't what one *had* that measured their worth in life, he explained pointedly. It was what one *did* that mattered. Santo realized the truth of Vergari's words. Backed by his family fortune, Santo started the Barrera Foundation, a group dedicated to building affordable housing for underprivileged families.

While on a trip surveying swampland outside the city that might be drained to provide land for building, Santo made a discovery that changed his life. Trudging through the marshy undergrowth, ever watchful for snakes and other swamp dangers, Santo caught a glimpse of red in the muck. It looked like a small sculpture — a piece of polished red stone carved in the shape of a viper. When he picked it up and cleaned the mud from the figure's head, its eyes began emitting a crimson glow.

Suddenly Santo felt stronger... faster... maybe even a bit larger. When the glow faded from the eyes of the serpent, vibrant energy coursed through Santo's body. In the innermost silence of his mind, a voice seemed to urge Santo to use this power to make Vibora Carmesi a force for justice, and to bring honor to the image of the viper.

Santo accepted the challenge and created the costumed identity of Redsnake. Using his own skill in the art of Vibora Carmesi combined with the mysterious energy received from the serpent idol, Santo Barrera now fights to defend the innocent of Vibora Bay who cannot fight for themselves.

Personality/Motivation: Redsnake wholeheartedly believes in the heroic ideals of acting with honor and protecting the innocent. He views his abilities not as powers he should be proud of, but as tools for fulfilling weighty responsibilities. With little tolerance for wealthy or gifted people who give nothing back to society, he greatly resents the necessity

VIBORA CARMESI

Maneuver	Phs	Pts	OCV	DCV	Damage/Effect
<i>Abrigo Alrededor</i>	½	3	-1	-1	Grab Two Limbs, +10 STR for holding on
<i>Arrastre Bajo Pie</i>	½	3	+1	+1	STR Strike; Target Falls
<i>Estrangule la Presa</i>	½	4	-2	+0	Grab One Limb; 2d6 NND(2)
<i>Mordedura Dolorosa</i>	½	4	-1	+1	2d6 NND(1)
<i>Mordedura Estrategica</i>	½	4	-1	+1	Disarm; +10 STR to Disarm roll
<i>Mordedura Hambrienta</i>	½	5	+1	+3	STR Strike
<i>Mordedura Mortal</i>	½	4	-2	+0	HKA ½d6 (2 DC)
<i>Mordedura que se Sacude</i>	½	5	-2	+1	STR +4d6 Strike
<i>Ondas</i>	½	4	+0	+0	+15 STR vs. Grabs
<i>Sacudimiento</i>	½	4	—	+5	Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort
<i>Sacudimiento Cuidadoso</i>	½	4	+2	+2	Block, Abort

Skills

Acrobatics*

Breakfall

Contortionist

KS: Vibora Carmesi

WF: Chain Weapons

WF: Whips

Elements

Weapons +1 Use Art with Chain Weapons
+1 Use Art with Whips

Optional Rules: The *Mordedura Dolorosa*, *Mordedura Hambrienta*, and *Mordedura Mortal* maneuvers take 2d6+1 location rolls. The *Mordedura que se Sacude* maneuver takes a 3d6 location roll. The *Estrangule la Presa* maneuver has a set target (the head/neck), and so does not require a location roll. The remaining maneuvers do not take location rolls.

Special Abilities: *Seguidores*, particularly those who learn the *Mordedura que se Sacude* maneuver, frequently purchase Combat Skill Levels with DCV, reflecting the acrobatic nature of the art. Highly skilled practitioners often buy several Damage Classes, making their NND and Grab maneuvers particularly effective.

Outsiders often fancy *seguidores de la vibora* as mystical adepts with a wide array of unusual powers. While a few *seguidores* undoubtedly do possess odd abilities, such "powers" generally stem from the individual practitioner's dabbling in some other mystical tradition. Vibora Carmesi itself holds few arcane secrets, but the art is often learned by people who seek out such knowledge. The confusion is quite understandable.

Though the art's reputation for widespread mysticism is not justified, its most puissant practitioners do sometimes exhibit a few strange abilities seemingly tied to the style's affinity for snakes, such as:

1) *Hypnotic Sway:* This ability entrances the opponent with a penetrating gaze and sinuous body movements, leaving him motionless and open to strikes (defined as a Mental Paralysis Entangle with no more than 3d6, 3 DEF).

2) *Lightning-Swift Strike:* The ability to strike so swiftly that the strike cannot be seen (apply *Invisible Power Effects* (*Sight Group*) to one or more of the practitioner's *Mordedura* maneuvers and to his STR).

of maintaining the facade of Santo Barrera, wealthy heir and eligible bachelor. Although as Santo he uses his wealth productively through the Barrera Foundation, he dislikes associating with the idle rich he frowns on. He spends as little time as possible keeping up appearances for his Secret Identity, which could result in its eventual exposure.

Redsnake underwent a fair amount of tragedy and deep soul-searching at a young age, leaving him an unusually serious and sober for a man in only his mid-twenties. Domingo Vergari encourages him to lighten up and see more of the beauty in life, but without much effect so far.

Quote: “You think you have the right to do whatever you wish to those powerless to oppose you. Let me show you how wrong you are.”

Powers/Tactics: Redsnake’s powers come from two sources: his training; and the mysterious carnelian viper idol he found. The serpent idol gave Redsnake super-strength sufficient to lift a small car, as well as enhanced speed and toughness. Unfortunately, it also made him vulnerable to cold attacks, like a cold-blooded reptile.

Highly skilled in Vibora Carmesi, Redsnake has a prowess in HTH Combat few others can match. Against “normal” foes, Redsnake prefers using totally non-lethal maneuvers, such as *Abrigo Aldredor* or *Mordedura Dolorosa*. When fighting tougher opponents, he favors his Normal Damage attacks. Although he has sworn no specific vow against killing, Redsnake has no wish to kill anyone, and won’t use the *Mordedura Mortal* against a living foe unless he has absolutely no choice.

Redsnake’s knowledge of Vibora Carmesi extends even to the near-mythical technique of the Hypnotic Sway. In Redsnake’s eyes, this technique is just part of Vibora Carmesi — he doesn’t consider its use dishonorable, even though it causes his foe to stand motionless while being struck. He hopes to develop other “special techniques” and powers as his warrior abilities improve.

Redsnake also employs a special whip with a high-tech energy discharge mechanism built-in. A local VIPER Nest built the whip as an experimental weapon, but lost it to Redsnake the first time it saw field action. The whip can either hurl bolts of energy or channel the energy into the whip itself, grounding and neutralizing the muscles of anyone wrapped in it. His code of honor prevents him from using the weapon’s ranged energy discharge against an opponent unless that opponent has already employed ranged attacks against him.

Lacking many investigative skills himself, Redsnake calls on two allies in particular to help him fight crime. One is Wendy “Wired Wendy” MacDougal, a kooky but good-natured twentysomething hacker renowned among the hacker underground for her skill with computers and other technological gadgets. The other is Bill Brannon, a veteran VBPD sergeant in the Weston Division who provides tips and information from a police perspective.

Campaign Use: As a local Vibora Bay hero, Redsnake can serve as an ally for PCs based in the

city, or a contact for PCs from other places. As the world’s highest-visibility practitioner of Vibora Carmesi, he’d be a logical person to contact if a character sought information about that fighting style. For characters leery of mysticism, Redsnake may be more approachable than some other Vibora Bay superhumans.

If you need to increase Redsnake’s power for your game, consider giving him a couple more Damage Classes with Vibora Carmesi, or raising his DEX and SPD to 29 and 7, respectively. If you *really* want to make him more dangerous, give him Lightning Fast Strikes by adding *Invisible Power Effects (Sight Group)* on one or more of his *Mordedura* maneuvers and his STR. If he’s already too powerful, options include removing his Hypnotic Sway technique, eliminating his energy whip, or dropping a couple of Damage Classes.

A true hero, Redsnake would never knowingly Hunt another hero. As a Hunter of villains, Redsnake gathers information on his adversary’s activities, tactics, and routines. Then he arranges an open showdown, confronting the villain with his crimes, asking for his surrender, and doing battle if necessary. He never attacks from ambush — if a foe seems too powerful for him to confront alone, Redsnake gets help from other heroes.

Appearance: Redsnake stands 6’4” tall and sports a stylized red bodysuit with a red cowl of vaguely serpentine appearance. The overall effect suggests a “red snake” without literally looking like a snake Halloween costume. His frame is powerfully muscled, and he carries a coiled whip on his right hip.

THE MILITARY WORLD

Although several Vibora Bay corporations, such as Drake-Victoria and American Light Arms, have working relationships with the Department of Defense, the vast majority of military activity in the Queen City centers around its harbor Coast Guard facility and the sprawling naval base located 20 miles west of the city. Farther west, near the cities of Destin and Gulf Breeze, is Caffrey Air Force Base. There are no Army facilities in the immediate area.

USCG Vibora Bay

Formerly a Victorian-era Life-Saving Service base, Vibora Bay’s Coast Guard station is located in a cluster of modest white wooden buildings located at the edge of the commercial port facility on piers seven and nine of the Easton Shore. Two 33-meter (16.5”, or 110-foot) *Island*-class cutters, the *Key Biscayne* and the *Key Largo*, are based out of the station; so is the 53-meter (26.5”, or 175-foot) *Keeper*-class buoy tender *Joshua Appleby*. The base’s other resources include four 7.5-meter (4”, or 25-foot) “Guardian” security boats armed with .50 caliber machine guns and an HH-60 “Jayhawk” marine recovery helicopter. The station is manned 24 hours a day, 365 days a year by competent active or reserve Coast Guard personnel.



The base commander is Captain Jonathan Healy, a career naval officer whose family has served in either the Navy or the Coast Guard for generations. He's also a direct descendant of the legendary captain Michael A. Healy, the highest ranking black man to ever serve in the Revenue Cutter Service (one of the Coast Guard's several precursors). A patient, good-natured man with a reputation for fairness, Healy is a favorite amongst the various ship captains who use Vibora Bay as their port of call. His station's responsibilities include the conducting of search and rescue operations, port security, waterway management, drug interdiction, inspection of foreign vessels, and general maritime law enforcement. Although these many intrusive duties would seem to place them on a collision course with the local business community, Vibora Bay's Coast Guard officers handle their work with a friendly aplomb that's the envy of their sister stations throughout the Gulf Coast.

Another secret to the Coast Guard's continuing popularity in the Queen City is its dedication to the enforcement of federal maritime pollution laws and the protection of marine animals (even the man-eating sharks!). Healy's second in command, Captain Shirley Aspenwall, is the master of the *Joshua Appleby*, which contains a complete marine and environmental science lab in addition to its electronic buoy-tending equipment. Aspenwall, who received her master's degree in marine biology from the University of Southern Florida, has developed a strong working relationship with local superhero Amphibian (see page 72). Together with a group of local university students, they're involved in conducting a series of wide-ranging environmental impact studies on the bay and surrounding areas.

Naval Station Vibora Bay

Located 20 miles northwest of the Queen City on the shore of the Choctawhatchee Bay, Naval Station Vibora Bay is a sprawling complex of Quonset huts, warehouses, and cement barracks that covers some 2,400 acres of landfill. While it's largely empty and quiet much of the year, the station serves as the third largest fleet concentration area in the United States. Built in 1942 at the height of the Battle of the Atlantic, it was originally a landing strip for long-range aircraft, but around the time of the Cuban missile crisis it was expanded to become a full naval base. Naval Station Vibora Bay has a deepwater harbor that can accommodate 34 ships and an 8,000-foot runway capable of handling any aircraft in the Department of Defense inventory. It's also the home base for the navy's Atlantic Carrier Group, which consists of the nuclear-powered aircraft carrier *Enterprise*, the guided missile cruiser *San Jacinto*, the destroyers *Stout* and *Laboon*, the attack submarine *Los Angeles*, and the supply ship *Millennium City*.

For much of the year, Naval Station Vibora Bay is a ghost city staffed by four dozen sailors, most of whom are assigned to base security. Its commanding officer is Captain Robert Maynard, a tall,

autocratic man with a distinctive thin-lipped smile. Maynard resents being assigned to the out of the way, serpent-infested installation. A petty man, he consistently takes out his frustrations on his subordinates, who in turn vent their annoyance on their underlings. Combined with the constant menace of poisonous snakes and mosquitoes the size of hummingbirds, this institutionalized niggling has made Naval Station Vibora Bay one of the *least* popular places in the world for an American sailor to get assigned to. All the same, Maynard and his men are conscientious about their job, most of which involves keeping the base orderly, secure, and clean while the Atlantic Carrier Group is out to sea.

When the Carrier Group comes into port the station comes alive, transforming overnight from a semi-deserted ghost town into a busy city of almost ten thousand. Sailors' families travel to the base from around the country to visit with their loved ones, either renting hotel rooms in Vibora Bay or moving into temporary housing on the base itself. The nearby city's restaurants, bars, and nightclubs quickly fill to capacity with rowdy naval personnel. When the Atlantic Carrier Group comes looming over the horizon once every four months or so the Queen City braces itself, because the following Friday and Saturday nights are going to be rowdy, wild, and profitable... assuming Weston doesn't get completely trashed.

Caffrey Air Force Base

Active since 1939, Caffrey Air Force Base is one of the nation's largest and most historic military facilities. During World War II it was one of the Army Air Force's primary proving grounds and training facilities, and was where Lt. Col. Jimmy Doolittle's team of B-25 bombers trained before their famous raid on Tokyo in the weeks after Pearl Harbor. After World War II, the Base was converted into a full-time testing facility, where missiles and other airborne weapons have been designed, produced and refined for more than fifty years.

The base commander, Major General Landon Schurtz, is an avuncular Southern gentleman with a background both as a test pilot and electrical engineer. Under his command are almost 10,000 engineers, pilots, and support staff responsible for providing the rest of the Air Force with the weapons and related technology they need for their missions. The Advanced Research Laboratory on the Base is kept isolated from the rest of the facility and has state-of-the-art electronic security systems as well as a crack team of Air Force MPs armed with the latest in heavy weaponry to defend it from both foreign spies and prying supervillains.

Though most of the forces stationed at Caffrey are specifically there either to design or test new weaponry, the base is also home to the 33rd Fighter Wing, a unit of about 1,900 airmen and civilians who fly F-15s and primarily specialize in patrol and pursuit missions. Also, the headquarters of the 20th Space Control Squadron (the Air Force's coordinating unit that works with NASA and UNTIL to

track, identify, and report on objects in near-Earth orbit) is located at Caffrey.

Because of the large number of top-secret test flights and occasional missile firings out into the Gulf from Caffrey, it's no surprise that this part of the Florida Panhandle (particularly the towns of Destin and Gulf Breeze) is a hotbed of UFO reporting. Both towns draw a large number of conspiracy theorists, "alien" hunters, and other connoisseurs of the bizarre to investigate strange sightings in the sky and tales of reverse-engineered flying saucers. Most of these "UFO tourists" wind up staying in Vibora Bay, and many of them feel so comfortable they never leave.

THE RELIGIOUS WORLD

Vibora Bay's citizens subscribe to a wide range of religions and philosophies, from traditional Protestantism to tree-spirit worship and every stop between. Religious tolerance is the only means to peace in a city with so many faiths represented, so it's considered socially gauche to be publicly critical of anyone else's belief system, no matter what one may think of it privately.

The High Apostolic Church

No book about Vibora Bay would be complete without mention of its colorful indigenous faith, The High Apostolic Church. Much as Brooklyn is the heart and home of Hasidism and Salt Lake City is the holy place of Mormons, the Queen City is the birthplace of one of the United States's most colorful Protestant sects. There are believed to be more than 100,000 members of this faith living in and around the city, with another 50,000 living in Haiti, Louisiana, and the former French colony of Guyana in South America. They're primarily black, and the most faithful among them are easily recognized by their loose cotton clothing, unique "kufi" style knit caps, and distinctive rosaries made from the polished teeth of man-eating sharks, alligators, and barracuda.

HISTORY

When Spanish settlers first began to import slaves from West Africa to Northern Florida in the sixteenth century, the country had already experienced an amalgamation of religions. After a brief period of persecution, the local Catholic Church all but gave up on trying to rid the Indians of their native beliefs, allowing the newly-forced converts to practice their old and new religions side by side. Recently-arrived slaves found that the local Indians' belief in spirits and magic was synonymous with their own indigenous Yoruba religion, while the Catholic Church's saints were similar enough to their own gods and *orishas* (or spiritual emissaries) to be used as fronts for their worship. Over the next two centuries Catholicism, Yoruba religion, and native shamanism blended into a widely-practiced but nameless slave religion that was somewhat

similar to the Santeria faith of Cuba, the Voodoo of Haiti, or the Macumba beliefs of Brazil.

Ten generations passed before Florida became a territory of the United States. Settlers from Georgia and Alabama came pouring across the region's northern border, bringing Protestant missionaries from the Methodist, Episcopal, and Baptist denominations along with them. While these well-meaning disciples had some success in other parts of Florida, they were spectacularly unsuccessful in Vibora Bay, where the locals (both slave and free) preferred to continue their faux-Catholic ways.

In 1910 a local woman named Latish Anne Duvall, a priestess of the polyglot Vibora Bay religion, made a pilgrimage to far-away Los Angeles to visit the famous black preacher William J. Seymour, founder of Pentecostalism. Incredibly impressed by what she saw at his Apostolic Faith Mission, Duvall returned to her home city to start her own tabernacle, The High Temple of The Pentecost with Signs Following, in 1912.

Duvall slowly but steadily attracted followers with her charismatic preaching and mixture of Catholicism, Evangelical Protestantism, and purely Viboran occultism. Several branch tabernacles headed by inspired followers arose on the outskirts of the Queen City in the subsequent decade, but it wasn't until she reorganized the church as The High Apostolic Church at the beginning of the Great Depression that the new religion began to see a remarkable spurt of growth. While many religious congregations suffered both in terms of membership as well as finances during the worldwide economic collapse, Duvall's church flourished, attracting thousands of new members in an event the church now refers to as the Great Livication. The

THE ELEVEN LAWS

Although Latish Anne Duvall was never one for lecturing folks about their private lives (she lived with three younger "husbands," after all), she did feel the need to establish an ethical framework for her parishioners to adhere to, partly because she knew that they expected her to do so. After a lengthy period of meditation and consultation with the Saints and Holy Spirit she proscribed the following Eleven Laws for the Brethren of her church:

1. Brethren may not steal.
2. Brethren may not kill except in self-defense or for sustenance.
3. Brethren may not eat human flesh.
4. Brethren may not fight other Brethren.
5. Brethren may not covet the property of others.
6. Brethren may not curse the names of God, Christ, or the Saints.
7. Brethren may not publicly complain about their financial situation.
8. Brethren must honor their parents.
9. Brethren can neither fear death nor take their own lives.
10. Brethren must teach these laws to their children.
11. Brethren must respect and obey these laws.

1950s and 1970s also saw additional groundswells of membership.

Although its activities are largely limited to the Vibora Bay and its surrounding areas, The High Apostolic Church has continued to wax in membership, wealth, and local political power as the years have gone by. When Latish Anne Duvall passed away in 1947, her daughter Sophia assumed leadership of the organization, beginning a tradition of mother-to-daughter succession that's lasted to this day. The High Apostolic Church is currently led by Latish's charismatic great-granddaughter Valencia, who acts as its president and primary spiritual leader.

BELIEFS

The High Apostolic Church embraces a polyglot theology in which Catholicism, Pentecostalism, and what can most easily (if somewhat inaccurately) be described as Voodoo all play equally important roles. The Brethren, as church members are commonly known, believe in a single, omnipotent yet somewhat distracted deity alternately known as Jehovah, Exus, or simply God. Because God is unable, or perhaps unwilling, to communicate directly with Man, members of The High Apostolic Church rely on various emissaries to intervene on their behalf and convey their desires, prayers, and dreams from the physical world to the celestial one. These semi-divine messengers are usually referred to as Saints, although they're alternately known as angels, gods, or *orishas* depending on what terminology a given congregation of the Brethren prefers.

Some Saints are benign, some malignant, most neutral... but none of them work for free. All Saints require services in the form of prayers and/or payment in the form of sacrifices before they'll act on behalf of a worshipper. Each is highly individualistic, with his own special portfolio, symbol, color combination, and representative number that can be employed in his summoning. They're also rather picky. Brethren have to be extremely careful to get their prayers and ceremonies correct or the Saints ignore their supplications. For example, if a Brother wished for his home to be free of venomous serpents (not an unusual desire in Vibora Bay), he'd first prepare a special altar to Saint Patrick, capture a rattlesnake, sacrifice it on the altar, make offerings of its blood mixed with whisky, burn certain candles, and then wear a crucifix made from its teeth and bones for a week. If he does all of that correctly, Saint Patrick tells God that the Brethren wants his house to be free of poisonous snakes. God, in turn, tells the snakes to move somewhere else.

Jesus Christ also plays an important part in the High Apostolic creed, though the exact nature of that role varies from congregation to congregation. Some Brethren believe Christ was the only man who could talk directly to the divine without saintly assistance, while others see him more traditionally as the actual son of God. Either way all Brethren view the direct experience of Christ or, more specifically, the Holy Spirit as a link between the physical and divine by which particularly holy

women and men can bypass the bureaucracy of the Saints. The manifestation of glossolalia (speaking in tongues), prophecy, faith healing, spontaneous exorcisms of demons, and becoming “slain in the spirit” are all considered signs of particular holiness. Church services begin with prayers, singing, rhythmic clapping, and chanting that gradually build up until members of a congregation begin to exhibit these *charismata* (as gifts of the Holy Spirit are known).

Ministers And Tabernacles

High Apostolic ministers don't preach sermons about moral principles or personal behavior, focusing instead on instructive lectures to help their congregation gain a better understanding of God, the Saints, and the Holy Spirit. This isn't to say the Brethren are unethical or immoral. Indeed, when a convert is baptized into The High Apostolic Church, he undertakes a solemn vow to abide by a set of rules known as the Eleven Laws (see accompanying text box). The primary thrust of the church's teachings, however, is to provide its members with the tools and abilities they need to confront malevolent external forces at work in their everyday lives. This explains some of the High Apostolic religion's strange focus on using the spiritual world to gain power over venomous snakes, man-eating sharks, piranhas, barracudas, poisonous frogs, alligators, crocodiles, poison oak, roaches, ticks, rats, kudzu, mosquitoes, tapeworms, annoying bosses, tax collectors, and bureaucrats... to name but a few dangerous nuisances inhabitants of the Queen City face on a regular basis. Although it's never implicitly stated in the church's doctrine, the idea that man lives in a fragile artificial world constantly besieged by a hostile natural one is a running theme in the religion (which is reasonable when you consider that it's also a constant factor in the everyday lives of many Viborans).

Individual High Apostolic tabernacles maintain a great deal of autonomy as far as minor doctrinal, membership, and individual parish decisions go, but all major judgments are made by the Church's steering committee, the High Apostolic Church Cooperative Program. The Cooperative Program meets annually behind closed doors at the High Temple on the Weston side of High Street in downtown Vibora Bay. The Cooperative Program consists of church ministers, priestesses, and lay-preachers. It's charged with charting the High Apostolic's financial direction, maintaining good relations with other faiths, and overseeing the church's missionary work in the Caribbean and Latin America.

THE SAINTS

The beings known alternately as The Saints, angels, gods, or *orishas* play an important role in the High Apostolic faith. Several of the more commonly summoned ones include:

Saint Andrew: The patron saint of fishermen, Saint Andrew has authority over all waterborne creatures. Prayers and offerings are made to him by those who would protect themselves from sharks, barracuda, alligators, and piranhas. His symbol is a shark's tooth, his colors are red and blue, and his number is 3. He's also known as Grim Toothy.

Saint Lazarus: The patron saint of the sick, Saint Lazarus has jurisdiction over all diseases, parasites, and insects. Prayers and offerings are made to him by those who would cure disease, ride themselves of parasites, or protect themselves from mosquitoes, ticks, and other such vermin. His symbol is an open grave, his colors are white and light blue, and his number is 17. He's also known as Babalu Aye.

Saint Patrick: The patron saint of Ireland, Saint Patrick has been given power over serpents by God. Prayers and offerings are made to him by those who would rid their homes of poisonous vipers. His symbols are the shamrock and the serpent, his color is green, and his number is 13. He's also known as Slango.

Saint Peter: The patron saint of war, Saint Peter controls life and death. Prayers and offerings are made to him by those who would survive violence. His symbol is the knife and iron bar, his colors are black and red, and his number is 7. He is also known as Brother Ogou, and may be cognate with the Voodoo loa Ogun.

Saint Regla: The patron saint of childbirth, Saint Regla rules over lakes, seas, and birth. Prayers and offerings are made to her by pregnant woman who would have an easy childbirth. Her symbol is a single eye, her colors are blue and white, and her number is 5. She's also known as Our Lady Yemaya.

A somewhat mysterious group known as The Convocation advises the Cooperative Program. Comprised of elder Brethren renowned for their wisdom, experience, and general *charismata*, this small group of men and women are the most holy members of The High Apostolic Church. They're charged with looking out not only for the general welfare of their organization but for the entire city of Vibora Bay as well. There are currently six elders in The Convocation: a restaurant owner known to one and all simply as Aunt Nancy; city official John Brown Trinquier; church head Valencia Duvall; retired sociology Professor Jacques Bergier Jones; Asian shipping tycoon Tony Wu; and a mysterious swamp hermit called Bobby Blueblood.



CURRENT CONTROVERSIES

The High Apostolic Church has always been a misunderstood group. Distrusted by Christians for being too occult, and by occultists for being too Christian, it has long been the subject of speculation, rumor, and controversy. In the early part of the twentieth century the church was accused of being a “free love” cult, though this accusation was based solely on Latish Anne Duvall’s personal life. Since the 1970s several “cult watch” groups have leveled a variety of unproven charges against the Brethren including accusations of ritual child abuse, drug use, and even human sacrifice. Subsequent investigations of these accusations by law enforcement officials have uncovered not a single scrap of truth to them.

One recurring problem which The Convocation has had to deal with over the years is DEMON’s various attempts to infiltrate their church’s clergy. Since the 1980s several ambitious Morbanes have targeted the High Apostolic’s tabernacles for a takeover, viewing them as potentially useful front organizations and potential recruiting grounds for agents (since the Church’s teachings and practices do condition followers to believe in and use the power of the occult). Although the general membership doesn’t know about it, there’ve been several quiet purges of the organization’s ministers by the Cooperative Program over the years. The Convocation would like to meet this problem in a more head-on manner, but it lacks both the mystical and temporal power to do so.

There’s also a doctrinal dispute within the Church which, if left unresolved, threatens to cause a fracture in its church convention. Due to recent cataclysmic events such as the destruction of Detroit and the Reality Storm, several tabernacles have come to the conclusion that the world is nearing its final judgment. They reason that the earth’s various evil superhuman beings are physical manifestations of dark *orishas* whose presence amongst us signals God’s displeasure with mankind. Correspondingly, these groups of Brethren have begun offering up prayers and sacrifices to the likes of Doctor Destroyer, Firewing, and Dark Seraph in the hopes of averting worldwide disaster. Since individual congregations are allowed to call their Saints by whatever names they choose, the Convocation can find no official theological fault with their coreligionists’ reasoning... but they fear the social repercussions of becoming known as super-villain worshippers.

chapter four:



COPS AND ROBBERS

LAW
ENFORCEMENT

Like every other modern American city, Vibora Bay has a significant crime problem, ranging from petty street crime, to professional robbery teams, to supervillains of every stripe. Fortunately, it also has hundreds of men and women dedicated to keeping the citizens safe from such predators.

THE VIBORA BAY POLICE DEPARTMENT

Like the Queen City it serves, the Vibora Bay Police Department blends venerable traditions and modern advancements into a mix that could only be found in one city in America. From waterfront beat cops to high-tech MARS (Metahuman Activi-

REBECCA CHAMBERLAIN

9 STR	11 DEX	10 CON
10 BODY	18 INT	16 EGO
18 PRE	12 COM	
2 PD	2 ED	2 SPD
4 REC	20 END	20 STUN

Abilities: Fringe Benefit: Concealed Weapon Permit; Fringe Benefit: Police Commissioner; Reputation: Police Commissioner And Advocate of “Clean Government” 11-, +2/+2d6; +1 with Pistols; Bureaucratics 15-; Conversation 13-; Deduction 13-; CK: Vibora Bay 13-; KS: Criminal Law 8-; KS: Government 13-; KS: Police Procedures 11-; KS: Politics 13-; KS: Movers And Shakers Of Vibora Bay 13-; Oratory 14-; Persuasion 13-; PS: Politician 15-; WF: Handguns

25+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Only Relies On Herself; Psychological Limitation: Mercurial (Changes From Fiery-Tempered, To Pleasant, To Coldly Polite Very Quickly); Reputation: Anti-Cop, 14- (only among VBPD police officers); Rivalry: Professional (Thomas Buford, Chief Of Police)

Notes: Rebecca Chamberlain knows what it means to be the “first”: the first black valedictorian in her high school’s history; the first black female to graduate atop a class at Sinclair University; the first black female elected to the city council from an Easton ward; and now the first female Police Commissioner. Being first gives her strength, but it’s a burden she never forgets... and she won’t let anyone else forget either.

As a city councilwoman, Chamberlain railed against corruption and cronyism in Viboran government, particularly in the VBPD under the former Police Commissioner, John Paris. Councilwoman Chamberlain also pushed hard for a more modern approach to law

enforcement, feeling the police force retained too many “old-fashioned” elements such as foot patrol officers, while underfunding cutting-edge tools like the MARS teams.

When scandals undermined Commissioner Paris in 2002, Mayor Richenda Barker decided to see if Paris’s biggest critic could do any better herself, and named Chamberlain to the post. Although she was a popular choice among the citizenry, the rank and file of the VBPD viewed the appointment with disgust. In their eyes, Chamberlain criticizes things she knows nothing about and cares little for the individual officers in the department.



ties Response Squad) officers, the VBPD reflects the unique nature of the city it swears to protect.

Behind The Scenes

The Vibora Bay Police Department employs roughly 7,000 people — approximately 5,000 officers and 2,000 administrative and support personnel. The VBPD divides the city into five Divisions: Waterfront East (roughly from High Street east to the city limits south of Duval and the Forum), Waterfront West (from High Street west to the city border and as far north as Union Station and Catalina Street), Easton, Weston, and North Metro (including High Street itself, Midtown and the Financial District). A Division Commander leads each Division and reports to the Chief of Police. A Division contains five Precincts, each led by a Captain who reports to the Division Commander, and each serving several neighborhoods in the city.

At its highest level, the VBPD serves two masters. Police Commissioner Rebecca Chamberlain wields the political and budgetary power, while command authority and operational control resides with Chief of Police Thomas Buford. By design, this duality aims to let the Commissioner look out for the department's best interests without neglecting day-to-day matters and free the Chief from the worst burdens of bureaucracy. The Commissioner is a politician; the Chief is a police officer. When the two leaders get along, the system works smoothly.

Unfortunately, Commissioner Chamberlain and Chief Buford do *not* get along. The conflict between them lies mainly in misunderstandings. Chamberlain attacked the organization of a corrupt Police Commissioner, and Buford saw that only as attacking the department. Chamberlain wants to modernize the force, and Buford interprets that as putting police officers out of work. Buford vehemently resists any change he thinks will negatively affect his officers, and Chamberlain takes that to mean Buford is a reactionary, clinging to old ways and stonewalling progress.

Each of them genuinely has the best interests of the city and the police force at heart, and they could work well together if they ever stopped talking past each other. Locked in a tooth-and-nail battle over the future direction of the department, their focus on “winning” prevents them from realizing how little truly separates them.

Buford is assisted on the executive level by an Assistant Chief, Michael O’Guinn, and several Deputy Chiefs who serve as department heads. O’Guinn is a carryover from the former Chief Steven Rutledge’s staff, and also doesn’t get along terribly well with Buford. It’s fairly well-known within the department that O’Guinn expected to be Rutledge’s successor, and now he’s annoyed at Buford for getting the job himself and Chamberlain for selecting him.



VBPD Organization

The VBPD aligns into six organizational branches:

Core Operational Police: By far the largest branch, the Core Operational Police (COPs) comprises the backbone of the VBPD. It consists of the Department’s mainstream police officers, including vehicle patrol, foot patrol, and detectives. Vehicle patrol officers outnumber foot patrol and detectives combined by a ratio of about ten to one. Foot patrol officers commonly walk a beat only in the Central

Waterfront and other areas with either high crime rates (like Catalina) or large numbers of tourists (like the blocks around the Forum). Different areas have varying numbers of each type of detective (homicide, burglary, fraud, and so on) depending on the frequency of various crimes in that area.

LAST: Land, Air, and Sea Team. Assorted special patrols make up this branch. A handful of Mounted Police guard the city’s largest parks and uphold traditions of years past in special events such as the Easter Festival. K-9 units fill assorted roles as needed, often working with VAN officers and com-

THOMAS BUFORD

13	STR	13	DEX	13	CON
15	BODY	13	INT	15	EGO
16	PRE	12	COM		
6	PD	4	ED	3	SPD
8	REC	26	END	40	STUN

Abilities: *Iron Jaw* (Physical Damage Reduction, 50%; Concentration (0 DCV; -½), Extra Time [Extra Phase to activate], Only Works Against Barehanded Attacks, Non-persistent); Martial Arts: Police Training (Choke Hold; Legsweep; Martial Disarm; Martial Strike; Weapons Element: Nightstick); Fringe Benefit: Local Police Powers; Fringe Benefit: Chief Of Police; Reputation: Tough Chief Of Police (A medium-sized group) 11-, +1/+1d6; +2 with Pistols; +1 with Police Training; Bureaucratics 12-; Combat Driving 12-; Criminology 8-; Deduction 12-; CK: Vibora Bay 13-; KS: Criminal Law 11-; KS: Police Procedure 15-; KS: The Law Enforcement World 13-; Oratory 8-; Persuasion 13-; PS: Police Officer 15-; Streetwise 8-; Survival (Urban) 8-; Tactics 12-; Teamwork 12-; WF: Small Arms, Clubs

75+ Disadvantages: Age: 40+; DNPC: Jessica Buford (Wife) 8-; Psychological Limitation: Stubborn; Psychological Limitation: Zealous About Protecting “His Men”; Psychological Limitation: Maverick Streak; Rivalry: Professional (Rebecca Chamberlain, Police Commissioner)

Notes: “Iron Tom” Buford earned his nickname in his early days as a patrolman in Atlanta. Working the poorest parts of the city, he developed a reputation for dealing with misguided youths on a personal level. If a discussion got nowhere, he’d let a young tough give him his best shot to get the kid’s attention and respect. No one knows how many blows Tom took that way, but plenty speak of the impact he made in turning their lives around. Over time, Buford became less a maverick and more a disciplined officer, rising to the rank of Captain in Atlanta.

He signed on with the VBPD as Division Commander in Waterfront West eleven years ago. From the beginning, Buford sometimes butted heads with both former Police Commissioner Paris and former Chief of Police Steven Rutledge. He irritated Paris by vigorously protesting budget cuts affecting officers under Tom’s command. He equally annoyed Rutledge by bypassing chain of command and going to Paris

directly, and by arguing with Rutledge over unpopular regulations the Chief instituted while trying to make the department over into his own image.

Though they made him few friends in upper command, Tom’s crusades won the loyalty of the officers serving under him. When choosing Rebecca Chamberlain as Vibora Bay’s first female Police Commissioner, Mayor Barker — anticipating unease among traditionalist elements in the police force — balanced the appointment by urging Chief Rutledge to retire, and naming “Iron Tom” Buford to the post.



munity outreach. Four VBPD helicopters provide reconnaissance and emergency assistance. The Harbor Patrol enforces laws and safety regulations on the waterfront, conducts search and rescue operations in the bay, and interfaces with the Coast Guard on smuggling issues.

VAN: Vice and Narcotics. Exposing Vibora Bay's seamy underside, VAN officers work to protect the Queen City from prostitution, illicit pornography, illegal gambling, drug dealers, and similar threats. VAN officers generally work undercover, and receive advanced training for those duties.

Forensics: This branch contains some of the best brains on the force. Crime Scene Investigators gather physical evidence, reconstruct crime scenes, conduct ballistics tests, and so forth. Forensics personnel work closely with detectives (especially homicide detectives) as well as outside agencies such as the Coroner's Office.

Special Operations: This broad branch includes some of the most dangerous — and most glamorous — roles on the force. The recently-formed MARS team (see below) utilizes cutting-edge technology to counter superhuman threats. A more traditional SWAT team provides sharpshooters and other special tacticians for delicate situations. The Bomb Squad's brave men and women specialize in identifying and disabling explosives and similar dangerous devices. The Hostage Negotiation unit and Riot Control unit also fall under Special Operations.

Administrative: A catchall branch for assorted necessary functions not directly related to preventing or solving crimes, this branch includes clerical support, technical support, budgeting and crime analysis, community outreach and education, and so on.

MARS Team

Vibora Bay's MARS team came into being with Rebecca Chamberlain's elevation to the Police Commissioner's office last year. The previous Commissioner resisted deploying MARS units, begrudging their expense and questioning their effectiveness. With the new Commissioner's determination to drag the VBPD at least partially into the twenty-first century, the VBPD put its first MARS on active duty just a few months ago.

Since the program is so new, it currently has only four trained MARS officers. Expanding the MARS program is one of the Commissioner's top priorities, and the team hopes to have sufficient trained officers and new equipment to deploy two more MARS units in the coming year. Chief Buford regards the MARS team dubiously — more because the Commissioner supports it than because he innately dislikes the idea — but its effectiveness thus far is slowly winning him over.



MARS TEAM MEMBERS

The members of the VBPD MARS team are:

Lt. Samuel Harrigan: The leader of the MARS unit, Lt. Harrigan started in Forensics but later became a beat cop. When MARS was formed, he jumped at the chance to combine his knowledge of science and technology with his devotion to police work, and the brass hasn't regretted its decision to place him in command. He's tough, experienced, tactically aware, calm in a crisis, and unperturbed by the bizarre. His almost *basso profundo* voice is unmistakable.

Regina Dunston: A veteran of the Millennium City MARS unit, Regina came to Vibora Bay to help found the first VBPD MARS unit. She maintains contact with her friends in the City of the Future, including Dr. Silverback (with whom she worked on several cases). Enthusiastic and a bit headstrong, Regina's style nicely balances Carrigan's more methodical approach; she serves as his second-in-command.

Benjamin Lucas: A quiet, intense man, Benjamin served seven years as a patrolman before signing up for MARS duty. Other officers considered him rather set in his ways, and his volunteering for the MARS team surprised them.

Philip Van da Larr: Fresh from the academy, Philip injects youthful exuberance into the squad. No situation is too dangerous for him to want to see it up close and personal. Despite this, he

seems to emerge from raids, attacks, and disasters unscathed. He's also a fast runner (7") and a crack shot (+2 OCV with Firearms, +2 versus Range Modifier with Firearms).

MARS EQUIPMENT

The VBPD MARS team employs many standard high-tech weapons and other equipment in fighting superhuman crime, including the gear listed in *Champions Universe* (page 60). Most were purchased from the same contractor who supplies the Millennium City MARS unit, and are identical in game terms.

MARS Armor Piercing Energy Rifle: When MARS officers have to face down powerful, injury-resistant villains like Ogre or Armadillo, the VBPD issues them this rifle. However, officers must take extreme care when using it, since a missed shot could easily penetrate a building and hurt a civilian.

RKA 2½d6, Armor Piercing (x2; +1), +2 Increased STUN Multiplier (+½) (100 Active Points); OAF (-1), Two-Handed (-½), 2 clips of 8 Charges each (-¼). Total cost: 36 points.

MARS Augmented Handcuffs: These cuffs, though similar to regular handcuffs, are much sturdier, and thus capable of holding supervillains who could escape from normal ones. They enclose the entire hand so a captive cannot escape with Contortionist or Lockpicking.

Entangle 4d6 (standard effect: 4 BODY), 8 DEF, Takes No Damage From Attacks (+½) (90 Active Points); OAF (-1), Cannot Form Barriers (-¼), Set Effect (hands only; -1), No Range (-½), Must Follow Grab Or Target Must Be Willing (-½), 1 Recoverable Charge (-¼). Total cost: 16 points.

MARS Pacifier: This device straps onto an unresisting or stunned target and keeps him in an semi-conscious stupor with powerful but nonlethal inhalants and drugs.

Drain STUN 4d6, Delayed Recovery Rate (regains 5 points per 20 Minutes; +¾), Continuous (+1) (110 Active Points); OAF (-1), 1 Continuing Charge lasting 1 Hour (-¼), Extra Time (Extra Phase to activate; -¼), Maximum Effect (can only reduce target to -10 STUN and keep him there; -¼). Total cost: 40 points.

MARS "Pastiface" Glue Grenade: This grenade fills a large area with sticky paste that hardens instantly to trap criminals. Most victims get enough on their faces to make it impossible for them to see.

*Entangle 5d6, 5 DEF, Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½) (75 Active Points); OAF (-1), 4 Charges (-1), Range Based On STR (-¼) (total cost: 23 points) **plus** Stops A Given Sense (Sight Group) (10 Active Points); OAF (-1), Activation Roll 13- (-¾), 4 Charges (-1), Range Based On STR (-¼) (total cost: 2 points). Total cost: 25 points.*

Zerby Multiphasic Rifle: The Queen City's MARS unit employs Isaac Zerby, a "mad inventor" working on gadgetry specially suited to dealing with the heavily mystical threats facing them. Several highly dubious projects grace his drawing board, but he's also developed a rifle that allows them to fight intangible foes.

Energy Blast 10d6, Affects Desolidified (+½) (75 Active Points); OAF (-1), No Knockback (-¼), 10 Charges (-¼). Total cost: 30 points.

Vibora Bay's Prisons

Vibora Bay's City Detention Facility is located near City Hall in Inner Easton. It's a temporary facility only, suited for short stays while prisoners await trial or assignment to other facilities within the state's corrections system. The six-story building houses approximately 3,000 prisoners at any time and is overseen by a force of about 250 personnel. It was built in 1962; it's overcrowded and requires extensive maintenance.

The Bay County Correctional Facility is the primary state prison in the area; it's a few miles north of Panama City. Holding about 4,900 prisoners, including a maximum-security wing with over 300 of the worst offenders, the BCCF has a staff of over 500. It has no facility designed to hold superhuman offenders; the state sends any such convicted criminals to Stronghold.

Lesser offenders may be sentenced to the Walton Work Camp near De Funiak Springs. The WWC holds about 1,700 offenders and has a staff of about 80, and puts "squads" of prisoners to work for Florida's Departments of Transportation and Public Works maintaining and cleaning public facilities and the state's highway system.

The state of Florida allows the death penalty. Executions are carried out by either the electric chair or lethal injection, and are performed at Florida State Prison in the town of Raiford, north of Gainesville.

FEDERAL LAW ENFORCEMENT

The local cops aren't the only ones enforcing the law in Vibora Bay. Various federal agencies also have a presence there.

THE FBI

Vibora Bay is the home of the FBI's Northern Florida Regional Office, which administers all FBI activity not only in Vibora Bay but also oversees offices in Daytona Beach, Gainesville, Jacksonville, Ocala, Panama City, Pensacola, and Tallahassee. Special Agent In Charge Bill Bodden runs a field office with over fifty Special Agents and another eighty support staffers. Though the local office may be involved in a wide-range of investigative assignments on behalf of the Justice Department, because of its location the Vibora Bay office is considered

one of the primary headquarters for FBI investigations into narcotics trafficking and smuggling, and to a lesser extent also concentrates on anti-terrorism programs, primarily counterintelligence. None of the FBI's various superhuman agents are assigned to Vibora Bay.

THE DEA

The Drug Enforcement Agency also has a strong presence in Vibora Bay, though the bulk of its investigative teams responsible for stopping drug trafficking from South America and the Caribbean into Florida are actually based in the much larger Miami office. The local Domestic Office has about twenty Special Agents and another twenty support staffers, and there are smaller Domestic Offices in Panama City and Pensacola.

Currently, one of the main focuses of the Vibora Bay office is the Sovereign Sons, a vicious gang of drug dealers (page 87). No strangers to violence, the Sons have killed half a dozen DEA field

agents, so taking down the gang is a priority for every DEA officer in the area.

The superheroine Jetstream, whose aquatic powers are similar to Amphibian's but more powerful (she telekinetically controls the flow and movement of water, allowing her to generate massive waves to swamp boats as well as swim at remarkable speeds), has conducted drug interdiction missions in Vibora Bay on occasion on behalf of the DEA. The two heroes have met on several occasions, but do not get along thanks to their diametrically-opposed political viewpoints.

PRIMUS

PRIMUS maintains a Regional Office in Vibora Bay which is largely responsible for the state of Florida (there is another PRIMUS office in Miami, but so much of its own resources are dedicated to monitoring superhuman threats emanating from the Atlantic and the Caribbean that its local responsibilities have been cut back to only its own

WE JUST NEED TO HOLD 'EM...

It may seem as if the local PRIMUS office is understaffed... and it is. However, the considerably larger New Orleans office, with a wide range of available agents and firepower, is only about 280 miles away, and PRIMUS can assemble a pretty impressive force in the Queen City in about three hours. But those three hours might be crucial in a crisis, so GMs should play up the delays and the sense of the agents being the only line of defense whenever it seems dramatically appropriate. There are also no particular experts on the occult posted to Vibora Bay. The office has access to the files of, and (if necessary) agents assigned to, UNTIL's Project Hermes, but as yet UNTIL's understanding of mystical phenomena remains limited.

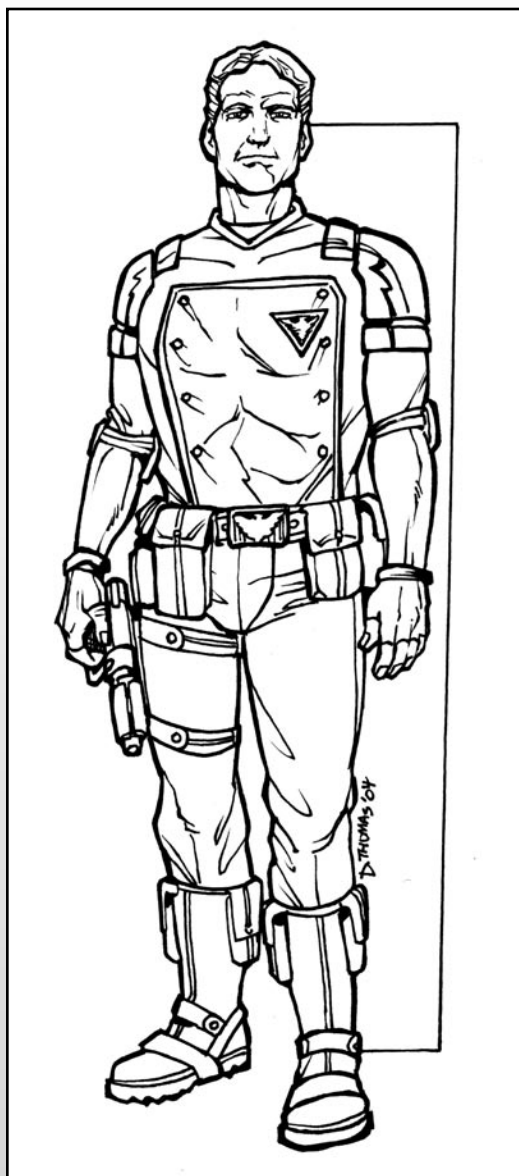
SILVER AVENGER BARTON STANO

33 STR 23 DEX 25 CON
15 BODY 15 INT 18 EGO
18 PRE 16 COM
20 PD 20 ED 5 SPD
12 REC 50 END 45 STUN

Abilities: PRIMUS equipment (Plasma Rifle, Uniform, and Helmet; see *Champions Universe*, page 44-45), Damage Resistance (5 PD/ 5 ED), Running 9½ END on STR, +3 PER with Sight Group, Power Defense (10 points), various appropriate Fringe Benefits and Contacts, +4 with All Combat, +2 with Punch, Acrobatics 14-, Breakfall 14-, Bureaucratics 14-, Climbing 14-, Criminology 13-, AK: Vibora Bay 11-, KS: Criminal Law 12-, KS: The Law Enforcement World 12-, KS: PRIMUS 13-, Spanish (basic conversation), PS: PRIMUS Agent 13-, Shadowing 12-, Stealth 14-, Tactics 14-, WF: Common Melee Weapons, Small Arms

200+ Disadvantages: Hunted: VIPER 11-, Watched: PRIMUS 8-, Psychological Limitation: Doesn't Believe In Or Trust Magic, Psychological Limitation: Patriotic, Psychological Limitation: Protects The Innocent, Public Identity, Social Limitation: Subject To Orders, Vulnerability (1½ x STUN from Poisons/Toxins).

Notes: Barton Stano became a Silver Avenger upon completing his PRIMUS training in 1994, exceeding even his childhood dreams of working in law enforcement. He was originally posted to the Atlanta office, which had three Silver Avengers, and based on his record he was selected to head up the Vibora Bay office in 2001. Some of his agents consider him a bit unimaginative and hidebound. He'd argue that the "book" was written for a reason, and though he's willing to improvise when necessary, he sees nothing wrong with taking advantage of the wisdom of those who came before him.



WEATHER WATCHERS

The United Nations's World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has an office in Vibora Bay to monitor tropical storms in the South Atlantic and the Gulf of Mexico. The office also serves as a coordination outpost for Tempest and other weather-manipulators when they work to blunt the effects of dangerous hurricanes (see *UNTIL: Defenders of Freedom*, page 23). The WMO Sub-Regional Director For The Caribbean is a Dane named Hobert Gjølsten, and his office is in the building next door to the UNTIL offices.

immediate metropolitan area). PRIMUS agents from Vibora Bay may therefore be called upon to handle threats from as far away as Fort Myers or Saint Petersburg.

The local PRIMUS office is jointly run by Administrative Agent In Charge Maureen Sykes and Silver Avenger Barton Stano, and fields a force of approximately 200 field agents. Sykes is an excellent administrator, known for her quick wits and remarkable ability to carry on several conversations at once while coordinating the efforts of PRIMUS in the field from her central command post. Once an excellent field agent herself, she suffered injuries at the hands of the supervillainess Howler in 1996 that relegated her to desk duty. After overcoming her initial disappointment (and mastering the use of her prosthetic hand), she enthusiastically accepted the challenge of becoming an AAIC and took over the Vibora Bay office in 2001. She likes the city and the wide range of challenges it presents. She keeps an open mind about the local superhumans — although she's unsure about the professionalism of heroes like Brother Thunder and Amphibian, she's successfully worked with both Black Mask and Dr. Ka, both of whom have earned a measure of trust and respect from her.

Stano, on the other hand, has not enjoyed his current posting. A bit of a traditionalist and “by the book” thinker, Stano doesn't believe in magic and considers most supers who claim to use it to be pretentious and overdramatic about what are clearly simple parahuman mutations. He believes the various trappings of “mysticism” to be largely a sham, and therefore mistrusts anyone who uses them no matter how much of a force for good they might otherwise be. This has led to some friction with local superheroes, even ones like Black Mask who don't have mystical abilities but believe in their existence. Apart from this particular prejudice, Stano is an

excellent Silver Avenger, with enormous courage and a firm commitment to the organization's ideals.

UNTIL

The closest UNTIL Regional Headquarters to Vibora Bay is in New Orleans (Base Designation A-8), which is commanded by Major Jeanne Coligny, a French native. Coligny, a twenty-year veteran of UNTIL, is well-liked by her staff and known for her extensive knowledge of, seemingly, everything. She's generally friendly and informal with subordinates and wears her hair in blonde curly ringlets that are exactly as long as regulations allow.

Vibora Bay has an UNTIL field office located in Midtown; it opened in 2002. The office is part of the 32nd Platoon, commanded by Captain John Sievers (OAD). It specializes in aquatic operations, including interdiction of smuggling rings that involve superhumans, known supervillains who operate primarily in oceans or rivers, and the odd rampaging monster from the mysterious depths of the sea. Sievers himself is a tall, thin man in his mid-forties with a strong background in SCUBA diving as well as expertise in several martial arts. He fosters an impression of always being in a sour mood, which he claims helps keep him prepared for the worst. His staff, which occasionally refer to him as “Mr. Sunshine” when he's not in the room, has gotten used to his perpetual gloominess and knows better than to take it seriously. He's an excellent tactician who takes care of the people under him, and though they tease him he has their respect and loyalty. Sievers doesn't differentiate in how he handles occult matters from any other paranormal crisis — as far as he's concerned, it's all superpowers, and he'd hesitate to stray from tactics that have worked for him in the past just because magic's involved.

Other prominent members of the staff include DAC Administrator (civilian) Sheri Blalock, a middle-aged woman who runs the office's payroll and paperwork, and her assistant Douglas Shumacher, who's also a civilian but is considering signing up for agent training. The office's equipment and weapons are cared for by Maintenance Corps Technician Victor Dorsett, a “gearhead” who races catamarans on his days off.

THE BARRACUDAS

UNTIL has assigned a single squad of seven agents to the office, as well as a small number of specialists (though, oddly, no one from Project Hermes... yet). The squad members call themselves the Barracudas; their mascot patch depicts a cartoonish-looking fish with a toothy grin brandishing a speargun.

The members of the Barracudas (A8-3) are:

Sergeant Glenn Scontras (OAD): Scontras is an old-school, crusty military man, with a severe buzz-cut and a fondness for cigars. He runs



the squad in the field under Sievers's orders, and handles drills and "personnel issues" with profane good humor. He's close to mandatory retirement age, and has no idea what he'll do when he can't be a field agent any more.

Corporal Curtis Stairs (C&F Specialist): Stairs is the team's criminologist and forensics expert, and has crossed paths with Black Mask on several occasions when both were investigating unusual crime scenes. The two have developed a friendly rivalry, happily insulting each other while hiding deep respect for the other's skills. A black man in his early thirties, Stairs has a quick wit and a keen eye, and is known for his struggles to stay under UNTIL's weight limits (he's very fond of doughnuts and other junk food).

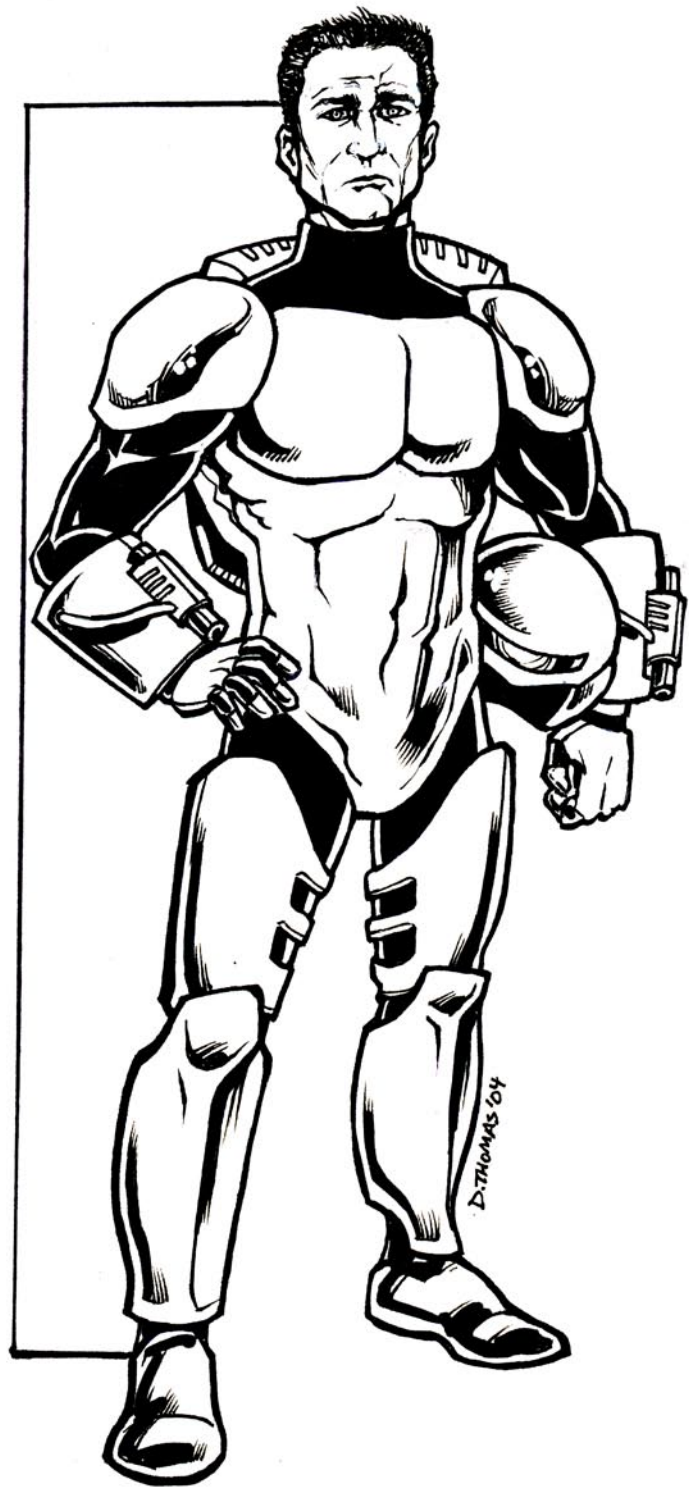
Lance Corporal Charlene McHale (OAD): McHale, an attractive redhead, is Scontras's right hand in running the squad and the best speedboat pilot in the division.

Private Yvette Descheppes (OAD): Private Descheppes is the team's most accomplished swimmer and diver; she competed in the 200-meter free-style for France in the 1996 Olympics. She's very religious (Catholic) and superstitious, and dislikes getting involved with occult cases.

Private Juan Carvalho (OAD): The youngest member of the Barracudas, Carvalho, is an accomplished marksman and an excellent cook. He hails from Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Private Henry Stott (WD): Stott, an Alabama native, is the Barracudas' swamp and forestry expert. Raised on streams and bayous, he's an accomplished tracker and rower. He's also fond of tall tales and ghost stories, which he teases Descheppes with whenever a mission takes a supernatural turn.

Private Ahmet Ali (OAD): Of Arab descent but born in Indiana, Ali is the team's medic as well as an excellent pilot and hand-to-hand combatant.



SUPERHUMAN ALLIES



The VBPd and federal law enforcement are fortunate to have the help of several independent superheroes who help keep the city safe. In addition to Black Mask and Dr. Ka (see Chapter Three), some of them include the following.

AMPHIBIAN					
Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes	
35	STR	25	15-	Lift 3200 kg; 7d6 [3]	
17	DEX	21	12-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6	
23	CON	26	14-		
14	BODY	8	12-		
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-	
13	EGO	6	12-	ECV: 4	
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6	
14	COM	2	12-		
20	PD	13		Total: 23 PD (8 rPD)	
10	ED	5		Total: 13 ED (8 rED)	
4	SPD	13		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12	
12	REC	0			
50	END	2			
50	STUN	6		Total Characteristics Cost: 140	

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Swimming: 17"/68"

Cost	Powers	END
10	<i>Speaking With Sea Creatures:</i> Telepathy 5d6 (Animal class of minds), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Communication Only (-¼), Concentration (½ DCV to establish; -¼), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Incantations (-½), Limited Class Of Minds (water-dwelling creatures; -½), No Range (-½), Visible (-¼)	0
	<i>Martial Arts: Yoshin-Ryu Jujutsu</i>	
	Maneuver OCV DCV Notes	
4	<i>Atemi Strike</i> -1 +1 2d6 NND(1)	
4	<i>Block</i> +2 +2 Block, Abort	
3	<i>Joint Lock</i> -1 -1 Grab Two Limbs, 45 STR for holding on	
4	<i>Joint Lock/Throw</i> +1 +0 Grab One Limb; 2d6 NND(7); Target Falls	
4	<i>Strike</i> +0 +2 9d6 Strike	
5	<i>Tough Skin:</i> Damage Resistance (5 PD/5 ED)	
6	<i>Padded Costume:</i> Armor (3 PD/3 ED); OIF (-½)	
5	<i>Natural Mental Wards:</i> Mental Defense (8 points)	
8	<i>Underwater Adaptation:</i> Life Support (Expanded Breathing: Breathe Underwater; Safe Environments: High Pressure, Intense Cold)	0

20	<i>Super-Swimming:</i> Swimming +15" (17" total), x4 Noncombat	1
5	<i>Dark-Adapted Eyes:</i> Nightvision	0
7	<i>Enhanced Underwater Sensing:</i> Discriminatory with Smell/Taste Group; Only Works Underwater (-½)	0
4	<i>Enhanced Underwater Sensing:</i> +3 PER with Smell/Taste Group; Only Works Underwater (-½)	0
4	<i>Underwater Scenting:</i> +4 versus Range Modifier for Smell/Taste Group; Only Works Underwater (-½)	0
7	<i>Underwater Tracking:</i> Tracking with Smell/Taste Group; Works Underwater (-½)	0
2	<i>Sharklike Senses:</i> Detect Magnetic Fields and Electrical Charges 13- (no Sense Group); Only Works Underwater (-½)	0

Perks

20 Contacts: 20 points' worth throughout Vibora Bay and the Superhuman World

2 Fringe Benefit: Vibora Bay Port Authority Security Clearance (restricted Local Police Powers)

Talents

3 *Aquatic Freedom:* Environmental Movement: Aquatic Movement (no penalties in water)

3 Lightsleep

3 *Magnetic Field Sensing:* Bump Of Direction

Skills

15 +3 with HTH Combat

3 Acrobatics 12-

6 Animal Handler (Aquatic Animals) 14-

3 Breakfall 12-

3 Conversation 12-

3 Criminology 13-

3 Electronics 13-

3 High Society 12-

3 AK: Florida's Coastline 13-

4 AK: Oceans And Waterways Of The World 14-

3 KS: Superheroes Of The '70s And '80s 13-

3 KS: Ecological Stats and Dangers 13-

3 CuK: Environmental Groups Worldwide 13-

1 Language: Atlantean (basic conversation; English is Native)

1 Language: Russian (basic conversation)

1 Language: Spanish (basic conversation)

3 Mechanics 13-

3 Mimicry 13-

4 Navigation (Marine) 14-

3 Paramedics 13-

4 PS: Search And Rescue 14-

- 3 Stealth 12-
- 3 Streetwise 12-
- 4 Survival (Marine, Arctic/Subarctic Coasts, Tropical Coasts/Pelagic Environments) 13-
- 3 Tactics 13-
- 3 Teamwork 12-
- 3 Tracking 13-
- 2 TF: Small Motorized Boats, Small Wind-Powered Boats
- 3 Scientist
- 2 1) SS: Climatology 13-
- 3 2) SS: Ecology and Environmental Toxicology 14-
- 2 3) SS: Genetics and Parahuman Biology 13-
- 2 4) SS: Marine Biology 13-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 241

Total Cost: 381

200+ Disadvantages

- 5 Dependence: must immerse himself in water at least once per Day or take 3d6 damage (Very Common)
- 5 Dependent NPC: Allison Zuccarro (girlfriend) 8- (Normal; Useful Noncombat Position or Skills)
- 10 Dependent NPC: Members of the Coast Watch (a small group of "helpers" who keep an eye on the shore) 8- (Normal; Useful Noncombat Position or Skills; Group DNPC: x2 DNPCs)
- 20 Hunted: Stingray 8- (Mo Pow, Capture/Kill)
- 5 Physical Limitation: uncomfortable in extremely hot and dry locations (suffers a -1 to all rolls) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Dislikes Unnecessary Violence, Always Tries To Negotiate Before Fighting (Common, Strong)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Dedicated To Protecting The Weak And Helpless (Very Common, Strong)
- 10 Reputation: "Extremist" liberal superhero and activist, 11-
- 15 Social Limitation: Public Identity (Geoffrey Lamb) (Frequently, Major)
- 76 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 381

Background/History: Geoffrey Lamb was born in Miami in 1970. From his earliest days he loved the water. He spent endless hours at the beach each summer, and could swim farther and faster than any of the other kids. In fact, the local swim club coach felt that with a lot of hard work, Geoff might compete in the Olympics.

Unfortunately, tragedy struck the Lamb family when Geoff was only nine. He and his parents were in a terrible accident when their boat was caught up in a sudden storm off the Florida coast. Both of his parents drowned; Geoff was only saved by the emergence of his mutation, which allowed him to breathe underwater. He survived near the capsized boat at sea for nearly a day before being rescued by the aquatic superhero Sea King.

Sea King, who had received his own powers from a chemical accident, was touched by the

orphan's plight. Recognizing the child's powers and bravery, he adopted the boy in his secret identity as Tallahassee businessman Rodger Bright. While Geoff went to private school in Tallahassee by day, on evenings and weekends Sea King trained him to become his partner in crimefighting. In 1983 Geoff made his debut as Amphibian. The two heroes were a very successful team throughout the 1980s, both on their own and as members of the Brigade, a loose-knit team of heroes based in Atlanta and operating throughout the Southeast.

Unfortunately, though Geoff was obviously grateful to Sea King and found his new life as a superhero tremendously exciting at first, as he grew older he became increasingly dissatisfied. He disliked the everyday violence of fighting smugglers and VIPER agents. He felt that simply opposing the plans of garishly-costumed criminals was neither personally satisfying nor the way he could do the most good for the world. By the late 1980s he was regularly at odds with his mentor, and in 1990 they acrimoniously broke up their partnership.

Geoff moved to Los Angeles. His personal problems continued, as he found he had few marketable skills and didn't know very many people outside of the Superhuman World. He worked for Greenpeace and other environmental groups as a spokesman and activist, and even contributed with his powers to a few environmental studies. He briefly fell in with a crowd of eco-saboteurs, and though he eventually renounced their methods his association with the group caused a minor scandal,



worsened when a tabloid reporter discovered his (and by extension Sea King's) secret identity and revealed it to the world in 1992.

The mounting personal problems in Geoff's life eventually caused him to start drinking to excess. By 1995, he was living in a rundown apartment in a bad part of Los Angeles. One night he happened upon a liquor store robbery in progress. At first, he started to just walk away and mind his own business. Then he stopped in the middle of the street, realizing with shame just how far he'd fallen from the ideals his mentor had taught him. Disgusted with himself, he turned back and broke up the robbery, holding the felons for the police.

Recommitted to doing something worthwhile with his powers, Geoff moved back to Georgia, where he tried to reconcile with Sea King (who was by now largely retired and in poor health). Though it was a slow process, Geoff was determined, and gradually the two put aside their differences and became friends again prior to Sea King's death in 1999.

Amphibian tried to re-establish his superheroic career in Savannah, but found little to occupy his time. In 1998, he met the amnesiac Atlantean princess Stingray (see *Champions Universe*, page 90), and the two fell in love. They had an idyllic romance for several months... but then her memory returned along with her vicious personality. She turned on him, leaving him with severe bruises and a broken heart. He still hopes to find her one day and "cure" her of her madness.

Geoff moved to Vibora Bay in 2000. He found the city — particularly its famous laissez-faire attitude toward celebrities — remarkably comfortable. Since then he's resumed working with various charities and local environmental groups like the Choc-tawatchee Long Term Ecological Research Center,

and has been a guest lecturer at Sinclair University. He's also unofficially become a one-man superhuman "coast guard," regularly rescuing boaters from accidents and the odd storm on the Bay and nearby beaches. Though he does little actual "crimefighting," he's probably the third-most-recognized superhero of the area after Black Mask and Dr. Ka.

Personality/Motivation: Amphibian is a fairly unusual superhero. He genuinely dislikes violence and goes well out of his way to avoid it, even though he's fairly effective at using it when he needs to. Despite this aversion, he's dedicated to saving and protecting both people and the environment, so he continues to maintain a costumed identity though he considers pursuing criminals a job for the police. Should a severe crisis threaten the entire city, he's willing to pitch in wherever his powers and skills seem most useful and risk his life alongside the other heroes.

The public thinks of Amphibian as a liberal superhero, and rightly so. He spends a fair amount of time promoting causes he finds important, though his views have softened considerably from his more militant youth. He occasionally appears on weekend news shows representing the "superheroic left," and has publicly supported several politicians whose views resemble his own. This has made him several political enemies, both from supers opposed to his viewpoints as well as some who simply find it unseemly that a superhero would reveal political affiliations at all.

Quote: "There's got to be a way to work this out without anyone else getting hurt!"

Powers/Tactics: Amphibian's powers are fairly straightforward — he's a third-rate brick well-



adapted to working in water. He has superhuman senses and the ability to communicate with (though not control) creatures whose natural habitat is aquatic. This includes both salt and freshwater animals — he can speak with otters, sea birds, and crustaceans as well as fish and cetaceans (though everyone knows crustaceans have very little interesting to say most of the time). Most of the time his relations with such creatures are friendly, and the animals he speaks with will provide him information based on their own limited intellectual capacity, or even physical assistance if it doesn't involve risking their own lives. Some creatures, such as sharks, may be too mean or hostile to help in any way.

In combat, Amphibian uses as little actual violence as he can get away with, preferring to apply immobilizing joint locks rather than throw punches. He's not a complete pacifist, though — he fights hard if there's no other way to protect innocent lives. He's also a lateral thinker, willing to try unorthodox tactics in battle.

Though Amphibian functions quite well on land, he does require total immersion in water for at least a few minutes every day, or his skin begins to dry out painfully.

Campaign Use: Amphibian is an interesting character for PCs to encounter, since the GM can use him to call into question some basic assumptions about the everyday lives of costumed superheroes. His actions and beliefs may challenge PCs unaccustomed to getting involved in politics or environmental issues, forcing them to think about matters they haven't previously considered. He also can provide support for a team facing a mission underwater, a dangerous environment full of potential adventures.

Amphibian is sometimes “assisted” by the Coast Watch, a group of “concerned citizens” (*i.e.*, fans, busybodies, and cop groupies) who keep an eye on the seashore and some surrounding neighborhoods. They often get into trouble and need his help, but on more than one occasion they've provided him with information and resources that made his work much, much easier.

To make Amphibian tougher, improve his “brick-ness” (increase his STR and defenses), and/or expand his sea creature abilities to give him the power to control such animals, Summon them, and the like. To weaken him, decrease his brick-ness by lowering his STR.

Amphibian doesn't really Hunt anyone — that's not the way he does things. He might investigate someone, or some institution, posing a significant risk to the environment, but in the end he's more likely to alert the authorities to what he's found than take action against the offenders himself.

Appearance: Amphibian is a handsome young man, standing 5'11” with curly brown hair, blue eyes, and an impressive physique. He has a friendly smile and a comfortable ease about him that some women find irresistible. His costume is a sea green bodysuit with black highlights (gloves and boots) and a golden “A” on his left chest; the outfit leaves his head bare and doesn't hamper him underwater.

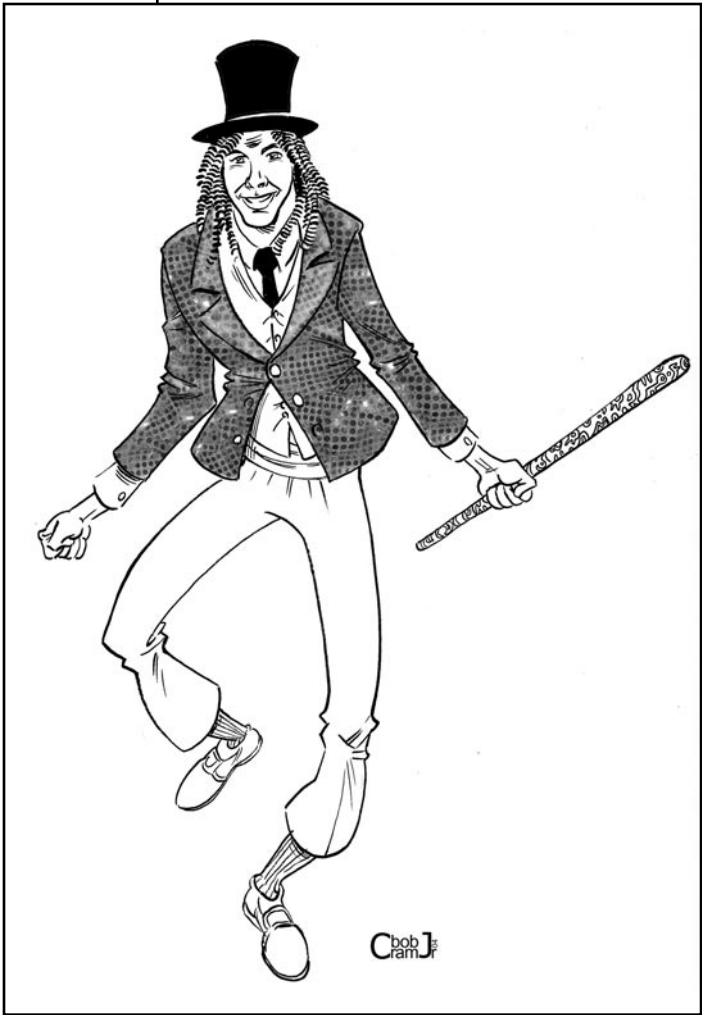
BROTHER THUNDER

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [1]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
21	CON	22	13-	
14	BODY	8	12-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
23	EGO	26	14-	ECV: 8
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
16	COM	3	12-	
7	PD	4		Total: 13 PD (6 rPD)
7	ED	3		Total: 13 ED (6 rED)
4	SPD	12		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
7	REC	0		
42	END	0		
33	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 125

Movement: Running: 6”/12”

Cost	Powers	END
10	<i>Tonton:</i> HA +3d6; OAF (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½) plus HA +3d6; OAF (-1), Only Versus Mystical Beings (-1), Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)	2
21	<i>Evil Eye Ritual:</i> Major Transform 6d6 (person into person with 3d6 Unluck, heals back normally); OIF (personal item of opportunity from target; -½), Extra Time (1 Minute; -1¼), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), Limited Target (humans; -½)	9
40	<i>Powders and Charms:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve; OIF (multiple OAFs; -½)	
1u	1) <i>Healing Potions And Salves:</i> Simplified Healing 6d6; OAF (-1), Concentration (0 DCV; -½), Extra Time (1 Minute; -1½), 8 Charges (-½)	[8]
2u	2) <i>Blinding Powder:</i> Sight Group Flash 12d6; OAF (-1), Does Not Work On Desolidified Characters (-¼), Range Based On Strength (-¼), 4 Charges (-1)	[4]
2u	3) <i>Sleeping Powder:</i> Energy Blast 6d6, No Normal Defense (defense is Life Support [Diminished Sleeping]; +1); OAF (-1), Range Based On Strength (-¼), 8 Charges (-½)	[8]
1u	4) <i>Hallucinogenic Powder:</i> Mental Illusions 12d6; OAF (-1), No Conscious Control (character can control activation of power, but not the effects; -1), Range Based On Strength (-¼), 6 Charges (-¾)	[6]
2u	5) <i>Incendiary Oil And Powder:</i> RKA 2d6, Area Of Effect (3” Radius; +1); OAF (-1), Range Based On Strength (-¼), 4 Charges (-1)	[4]
1u	6) <i>Zombie Freedom Powder:</i> Dispel Summon 20d6; OAF (-1), Only Works On Summon Used To Create/Conjure Zombies (-1), Range Based On Strength (-¼), 2 Charges (-1½)	[2]
2u	7) <i>Obscuring Cloud:</i> Change Environment 8” radius, -4 to Normal Sight PER Rolls, -4 to Smell/Taste Group PER Rolls, Multiple Combat Effects; OAF (-1), Range Based On Strength (-¼),	

	8 Charges (-½)	[8]
1u	8) <i>Fearsome Vapors</i> : Mind Control 12d6; OAF (-1), Set Effect (only to inflict fear; -1), Range Based On Strength (-¼), 6 Charges (-¾)	[6]
	<i>Martial Arts: Baton-Fighting</i> (Usable w/Clubs)	
	Maneuver	OCV DCV Notes
4	Parry	+2 +2 Block, Abort
4	Strike	+0 +2 5d6 Strike
3	Legsweep	+2 -1 4d6 Strike, Target Falls
4	Disarm	-1 +1 Disarm; 25 STR to Disarm
6	<i>Protective Charm (Personal Safety I)</i> : Armor (3 PD/3 ED); IAF (-½)	0
10	<i>Protective Charm (Personal Safety II)</i> : Physical Damage Reduction, Resistant, 25%; IAF (-½)	0
10	<i>Protective Charm (Personal Safety II)</i> : Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 25%; IAF (-½)	0
7	<i>Protective Charm (Safety Of The Sight)</i> : Sight Group Flash Defense (10 points); IAF (-½)	0
7	<i>Protective Charm (Safety Of The Mind)</i> : Mental Defense (15 points total); IAF (-½)	0
7	<i>Protective Charm (Safety Of The Soul)</i> : Power Defense (10 points); IAF (-½)	0
7	<i>Protective Charm (Luck)</i> : Luck 2d6; IAF (-½)	0



Perks	
2	Fringe Benefit: Houngan
2	Reputation: local houngan and mystical troubleshooter (among most Viborans) 11-, +2/+2d6
Talents	
6	Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)
27	Danger Sense (immediate vicinity, out of combat, Sense) 13-
Skills	
6	+2 with Baton-Fighting
3	Acrobatics 13-
3	Animal Handler (Birds, Monkeys) 13-
3	Breakfall 13-
3	Concealment 13-
3	Conversation 13-
3	Gambling (Dice Games, Dominoes) 13-
3	AK: Vibora Bay 13-
3	KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 13-
3	KS: Herb Gardening 13-
5	KS: Vodoun 15-
3	Language: French (completely fluent; English is Native)
2	Language: Creole (fluent conversation)
3	Mimicry 13-
3	Oratory 13-
3	Paramedics 13-
5	Power: Powders and Charms 14-
4	PS: Houngan 14-
3	PS: Dancer 13-
3	Sleight Of Hand 13-
3	Stealth 13-
3	Streetwise 13-
3	Ventriloquism 13-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 265

Total Cost: 390

200+ Disadvantages

25	Hunted: Petro Loas 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)
20	Hunted: Sovereign Sons 8- (Mo Pow, Capture/Kill)
20	Psychological Limitation: Protects The People Of Vibora Bay, Particularly Blacks And The Poor (Common, Total)
15	Psychological Limitation: Devoted To Opposing The Efforts Of Local Evil Spirits (Common, Strong)
15	Psychological Limitation: Overconfident And Cocky (Common, Strong)
10	Social Limitation: Public Identity (Clark Benoit) (Frequently, Minor)
85	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 390

Background/History: Clark Benoit (pronounced BEN-wah) was born in Les Cayes, Haiti in 1971. He was the fifth of seven children, and his immediately-older siblings were twin sisters, a birth order that traditionally heralded a lucky and powerful child. His family had a small farm that barely provided enough food for the family, and from an early age Clark was sent to town to look for odd jobs. Before long he

found regular work assisting Old Hubert — the local *houngan*, or Voodoo priest — by sweeping the walk and helping care for the various instruments and items used during ceremonies. Old Hubert quickly recognized Clark's powerful mystic potential and began to train him in the mystical arts of charms, herbs, and root-work. By his late teens, Clark had learned all that Hubert had to teach. He emigrated to Vibora Bay in 1988 to seek his fortune.

In Vibora Bay, Clark quickly found work in the *houngan* of Sister Rain, the city's mambo and mystical protector of the black and Caribbean neighborhoods of Weston. Clark volunteered his services as both a root-worker and “mystical troubleshooter,” helping Sister Rain exorcize mischievous or evil spirits and generally aid the Voodoo community. He took on the costumed identity of “Brother Thunder” in the spirit of their new partnership, and soon he was nearly as well-known and respected as she. For a while Clark and Sister Rain were romantically involved, but eventually they agreed they were incompatible. They find remaining friends and partners far less stressful than dating.

Clark has come of age in Vibora Bay and considers it his home; he rarely returns to Haiti, and that only to visit family and Old Hubert. He's a well-known figure on the streets of Weston, where he's well-liked by the local vendors, musicians, and other denizens. Several of them have called on him for help with Petro loa, curses, illnesses, and other minor magical maladies, and his record of success is enviable. As a “mystical investigator,” he helps solve any magical problem a client might have, whether related to Voodoo or not (though Voodoo is the “lens” he understands magic through, and therefore he'll use Voodoo terms and techniques no matter the actual nature of the problem).

Personality/Motivation: Brother Thunder is genuinely kindhearted and only charges enough money for his services to make a reasonable living; he frequently reduces his price for poor clients, or accepts barter or favors (he once exorcized several nasty poltergeists from a basement in exchange for a blueberry pie). He sends a portion of his earnings to his family in Haiti, but he has little other contact with them. The rest of his money goes to rent a small apartment in the Weston Tangle (though he frequently spends the night at the Pierre Street Community Center), buy flashy and colorful clothing (he's fond of sequins, clashing colors, and oversize hats), parties, and alcohol. He's charming, friendly, and amusingly full of himself. He frequently refers to himself in the third person and regularly declares himself the “champion of the people” and the “worst nightmare of the bad ju-ju.”

Quote: “Is that all you've got? Whoo-ee, I was hoping for a challenge!”

Powers/Tactics: Brother Thunder's powers come from the various charms, amulets, talismans and fetishes he makes. His primary weapons are small bags of various powders that he mixes from odd ingredients like graveyard dust, frog's tears, and the leaves of some of the small plants he cultivates in a back room at the Pierre Street Center. These he wraps in small bits of cloth and hurls at opponents, or opens the packages into his hand and then blows the powder at them.

Brother Thunder also wears a number of charms and talismans on his person, mostly fashioned from small flowers or twisted gold wire. He carries a small cane that has had mystical runes carved into it, making it even more effective as a hand-to-hand weapon against magical inhuman creatures.

Brother Thunder's *nom de guerre* sometimes makes people think he's a mighty warrior or has the magical power to control the weather, but neither is true — he chose it to match Sister Rain's. He prefers to avoid open battle, and if forced into a violent conflict uses cover as much as he can (and, if fighting with allies, adopts a “support” role more than a “front-line combatant” role).

Campaign Use: Brother Thunder is a local celebrity whose reputation on the street is enhanced both by his obvious power and his oversized personality. He can easily become an irritant to PCs who take their battles against supernatural evil more seriously, or a drinking buddy of those who share his lighthearted approach. When faced with a genuine threat, Brother Thunder becomes more serious, though if he succeeds he'll only become more insufferable afterwards. Failure, on the other hand, might sober him up some.

If you want to make Brother Thunder stronger, give him some innate powers instead of abilities based on Voodoo fetishes. Maybe you could remove his Dispel Zombie power from his Multipower and make it a natural power, or maybe he knows a few attack spells and curses that work quickly enough to be effective in combat. To weaken him, reduce his Characteristics so he's much more like a normal person physically.

Brother Thunder doesn't really take things seriously enough to hunt villains. He might stalk a particularly malevolent ghost or other threat he has to protect a client from, but that's all.

Appearance: Brother Thunder is a black man in his early 30s, with brown eyes and curly black hair worn in shoulder-length dreadlocks. He stands about 6'6", but is very thin and gangly (most of his height seems to be in his legs, especially when he dances). He has no set “costume,” but dresses outrageously in ill-fitting suits covered with spangles, sequins, and various designs, embroidered vests, long coats, and occasionally such accessories as spats, top hats, or oversized boutonnieres as the mood strikes him.

SISTER RAIN

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
8	STR	-2	11-	Lift 75 kg; 1½d6 [1]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
12	CON	4	11-	
9	BODY	-2	11-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
23	EGO	26	14-	ECV: 8
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
20	COM	5	13-	
5	PD	3		Total: 11 PD (6 rPD)
6	ED	4		Total: 12 ED (6 rED)
4	SPD	10		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
4	REC	0		
30	END	3		
20	STUN	1		Total Characteristics Cost: 102

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost Powers **END**

115	<i>Loa Possession Powers:</i> Variable Power Pool (Magic Pool), 100 base + 50 control cost; Only For Powers Associated With Conjured Loa (see examples below; -1), Side Effects (various Disadvantages [see below], always occur; -½), Gestures (both hands; -½), Incantations (-¼)	var
25	<i>Healing Touch:</i> Healing 2d6, any diminished Power or Characteristic one at a time (+¼)	2
6	<i>Protective Charm (Personal Safety I):</i> Armor (3 PD/3 ED); IAF (-½)	0
10	<i>Protective Charm (Personal Safety II):</i> Physical Damage Reduction, Resistant, 25%; IAF (-½)	0
10	<i>Protective Charm (Personal Safety II):</i> Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 25%; IAF (-½)	0
7	<i>Protective Charm (Safety Of The Sight):</i> Sight Group Flash Defense (10 points); IAF (-½)	0
7	<i>Protective Charm (Safety Of The Mind):</i> Mental Defense (15 points total); IAF (-½)	0
7	<i>Protective Charm (Safety Of The Soul):</i> Power Defense (10 points); IAF (-½)	0
7	<i>Protective Charm (Luck):</i> Luck 2d6; IAF (-½)	0

Perks

3	Fringe Benefit: Mambo	
3	Reputation: Local Mambo and Conjuror (among most Viborans) 11-, +3/+3d6	

Talents

6	Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)	
3	Lightsleep	

Skills

3	Animal Handler (Birds, Reptiles and Amphibians) 13-	
3	Bureaucratics 13-	
3	Conversation 13-	
7	KS: Voodoo And The Loas 17-	
3	CuK: The Poor of Vibora Bay 13-	
3	AK: Vibora Bay 13-	
2	Language: Fon (fluent conversation; English	

is Native)

2	Language: French (fluent conversation)	
3	Oratory 13-	
3	Paramedics 13-	
9	Power: Loa Possession 17-	
6	PS: Mambo 16-	
2	PS: Community Center Administrator 11-	
3	Stealth 13-	
3	Streetwise 13-	
3	Trading 13-	

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 267

Total Cost: 369

200+ Disadvantages

25	Hunted: Petro Loas 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)	
20	Hunted: Sovereign Sons 8- (Mo Pow, Capture/Kill)	
20	Psychological Limitation: Protects The Innocent And Helpless, Especially Of Vibora Bay (Very Common, Strong)	
15	Psychological Limitation: Believes And Teaches The Philosophy And Ethics Of Voodoo (Common, Strong)	
10	Psychological Limitation: Mistrusts Computers And Other High Technology (Common, Moderate)	
15	Social Limitation: Public Identity (Brigitte Sabatiere) (Frequently, Major)	
64	Experience Points	

Total Disadvantage Points: 369

**EXAMPLE POWERS FOR LOA POSSESSION
POWERS POWER POOL**

Here are the powers available to Sister Rain from each *loa* she can summon:

Cost Power **END**

Agassou

50	1) <i>Personal Protection:</i> Force Field (10 PD/10 ED/10 Mental Defense/10 Power Defense), Protects Carried Items	5
50	2) <i>Group Protection:</i> Force Wall (8 PD/8 ED; 4" long and 3" tall) Side Effect: Psychological Limitation: Code Versus Killing (Common, Strong)	5

Aida-Wedo

50	1) <i>Controlling Plants:</i> Mind Control 10d6 (Plant class of minds)	5
40	2) <i>Plant Speech:</i> Telepathy 8d6 (Plant class of minds)	4
3	3) <i>Unhindered:</i> Environmental Movement (no penalties for moving through undergrowth)	0
3	4) <i>Protection from Poisons:</i> Life Support (Immunity to Phytotoxins) Side Effect: Psychological Limitation: Protective of Nature (Common, Strong)	0

Damballah

23	1) <i>Speaking In Tongues:</i> Universal Translator 16-	0
20	2) <i>Service Of Snakes:</i> Mind Control 8d6 (Animal class of minds); Only Versus Serpents And Serpent-Like Beings (-1)	4

- 3 3) *Protection From Venom*: Life Support (Immunity to Ophidotoxins)
- 8 4) *The Wisdom Of Damballah*: Detect Damballah's Answer To A Question About A Single Thing 16- (no Sense Group) 0
Side Effect: Physical Limitation: Weakened and Clumsy Limbs (-2 to any physical task, -2" Run)
- Erzulie**
- 45 1) *Love Or Lust*: Mind Control 12d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Set Effect (only to inflict love or lust; -1) 0
Side Effect: Psychological Limitation: Self-Centered (Common, Strong)
- Guede**
- 10 1) *Animate The Dead*: Summon eight 178-point Zombie (see *The HERO System Bestiary*, page 127); Concentration (0 DCV throughout casting; -1), Extra Time (5 Minutes; -2), Must Have Bodies To Work With (-1) 5
- 18 2) *Aura Of Guede*: +40 PRE; Costs Endurance (to activate; -¼), Only Versus Undead (-1) 6
Side Effect: Psychological Limitation: Prankster With Dark Sense of Humor (Common, Strong)
- Ogou**
- 20 1) *Strength Of Iron*: +30 STR; No Figured Characteristics (-½) 3
- 50 2) *Fiery Blast*: Energy Blast 10d6 5
- 10 3) *Command Over Metal*: Telekinesis (10 STR); Only Works On Natural Metals (-½) 4
Side Effect: Psychological Limitation: Loves To Fight (Common, Strong)
- Papa Legba**
- 50 1) *The Crossroads Of La Bas*: Extra-Dimensional Movement (any location within the Quaternion Realms), x8 Increased Mass 5
- 21 2) *Finding The Path*: Detect The Desired Way or Direction 17- (no Sense Group), Discriminatory, Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), Sense 0
Side Effect: Physical Limitation: Lame (-2" Run)

Background/History: Brigitte Sabatiere was born in Vibora Bay in 1968 to a single mother named Harriet, who worked as a housekeeper in a local motel. Her father's identity is unknown to her. Harriet died of a heart attack when Brigitte was five, so the young girl lived with various relatives on and off until her early teens, when she was taken in by a second cousin who was actively involved in the local Voodoo church.

Brigitte, who was a shy child and had shown little interest in school when she bothered to attend, was fascinated by the Voodoo rituals and stories she was told. She began to spend a great deal of time in the Pierre Street hounfort and Community Center, where she took a job cleaning the office and maintaining the altars. The *houngan* at the time, Laguerre, noticed her intelligence and fierce desire

to learn, and began instructing her in the arts of the mambo and the summoning of loas. He also put her in charge of administering the office and filling out the mountains of paperwork for the various grants the Center received for its charitable works. Soon she was helping him officiate at the *hounfort*'s regular ceremonies. In 1986 she was possessed by a loa for the first time, in this case Damballah, the patron loa of Vibora Bay. Unlike most mambos, however, Brigitte found that possession not only allowed the loa to speak through her and provide information and advice — each one also gave her remarkable mystical abilities.

By the time she was twenty, everyone in the local community agreed Brigitte was the most powerful and effective mambo the church had ever seen. When Laguerre retired in 1990, she was the unanimous choice to replace him, despite her own concerns that she was far too young and inexperienced. Nevertheless, she took the job, changing her name to Sister Rain. She dedicated herself to protecting her community from the activities of evil loas and other mischievous spirits, who are unfortunately all too common in the Queen City. For a while she was romantically involved with Brother Thunder, who works with her at the Center, but they amicably separated in 1999. She's considered one of the city's most faithful protectors by the residents of Weston — though Brother Thunder's activities are flashier and frequently more public, those in the know are quite aware that he works under her guidance and wisdom.



Personality/Motivation: Anyone who meets Sister Rain in her professional capacity will be startled by the changes in her personality when she becomes a *cheval*, or mount, of a loa. In her daily life she's soft-spoken, though strong-willed, and unfailingly polite and even-tempered. However, when she's being "ridden," she takes on personality quirks and aspects of the individual loas involved. Thus, when being ridden by Ogou she becomes rougher and more aggressive, as well as fond of cigars, rum, and the color red. When Papa Legba is in charge, she walks with a limp while telling lengthy parables.

Sister Rain considers the loas she periodically summons to be her friends as well as powerful spirits, and frequently allows herself to be possessed even in situations where she doesn't require their specific advice. Thus, at any time she's encountered she may manifest a completely different personality and powers. When possessed, she retains control over her actions, though her desires may be affected by the personality of the loa, and she fully remembers everything that happens to her as a *cheval* (unlike many mambos).

Sister Rain in no way considers herself a superhero, and would find the suggestion ridiculous. She sees herself as a religious leader and protector of her *communité* first, the city of Vibora Bay second, and any other people well after that.

Quote: "*Mangez loa!* I summon Papa Legba to my side! The faithful of the *Bondye* need you!"

Powers/Tactics: Sister Rain's powers primarily come from her ability to call on the loas, the spirits of the natural world or representations of intangible principles like love, war, or death. These spirits, part of a pantheon of thousands, serve God

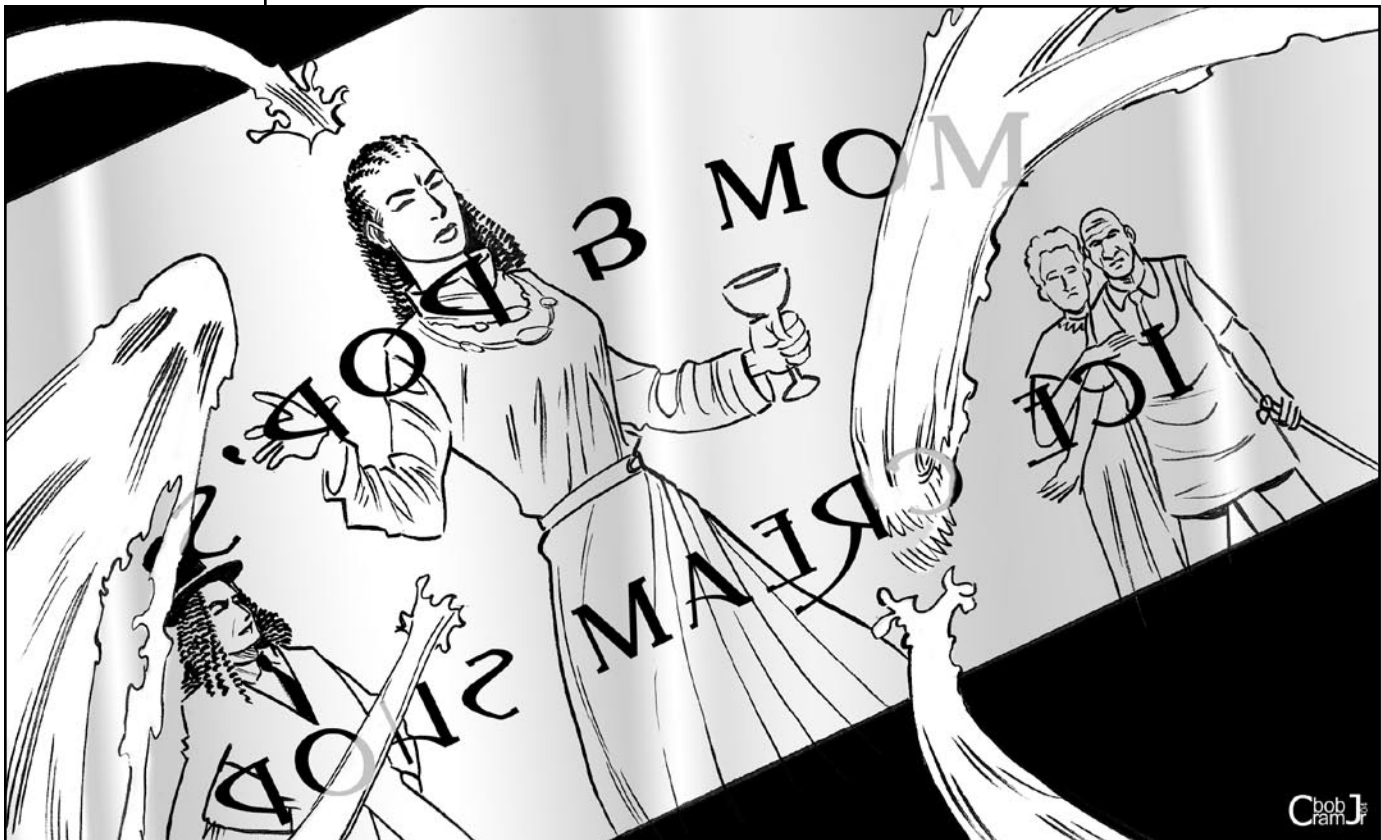
(known usually as *Bondye*, the Good God) and act on his behalf, since he's far too distant and powerful to waste his time dealing with the day-to-day concerns of his subjects.

Like all mambos, Sister Rain serves her *communité* by allowing the loas to possess her body, through which they can provide assistance and advice to her followers. She differs from most mambos in two ways, however: first, when possessed, she retains her memories of the time she spends possessed; second, when possessing her, each loa gives her unique superhuman abilities (as well as occasional physical and mental problems). Her VPP represents these powers — she can switch between loas at will with a brief dance and chant, but each loa can only give her its specific abilities. There are hundreds of known loas, and GMs are encouraged to research additional loas and expand the list of examples given above.

Campaign Use: Sister Rain is not a combat-oriented character (though she herself might dispute that when Ogou is in charge). Instead, she's usually put to better use as a resource for other heroes like the PCs, providing them with oracular information from the likes of Damballah or Papa Legba. She also works well with her longtime partner, Brother Thunder, for whom she can act as both a leveling influence as well as a resource to be protected.

To make Sister Rain more powerful, increase the size of her VPP and the Active Points in each of the abilities a given loa provides her. To weaken her, decrease either her VPP or her Characteristics.

Sister Rain doesn't really Hunt anyone. She's a protectress and servant of her *communité*, not a warrior or seeker of vengeance.



Appearance: Sister Rain is a beautiful black woman in her mid-thirties, with brown eyes, high cheekbones, and long black hair that she frequently wears in beaded braids. She doesn't have a regular "costume," though she's prone to wearing dresses with high collars in bright, primary color combinations. She regularly wears several charms made of colored beads, small feathers, and twisted gold wire, especially if she's concerned about "rada" loas or other malevolent spirits.

THE PIERRE STREET COMMUNITY CENTER

The Pierre Street Community Center is a nonprofit social services agency that provides assistance to the Caribbean and black communities of Inner Weston. It offers translation services, "English as a Second Language" classes, and counseling, as well as supporting various neighborhood projects like after-school programs and care for the elderly. Sister Rain administers the agency with the help of several volunteers from the neighborhood.

The Center itself is also the location of Sister Rain's *hounfort*, or Voodoo place of worship. She holds services there every Sunday night, acting as the *mambo*, or priestess, for the local Voodoo-practicing community (known as the *societe*). Ceremonies are held in the back courtyard, which is roofed but otherwise open to the alleys — there are short walls between it and the sidewalk, but passersby can easily see over them. A perpetual fire burns in the center of the courtyard, or *peristyle*, and in the center of the fire is an iron bar representing the forge of the loa Ogou. From the roof a model ship hangs on small wires; this is a symbol of another loa, Erzulie.

Next door to the peristyle is the enclosed hut, called the *pe*, where the hounfort keeps its consecrated altar. Scattered across the altar are any number of odd objects Sister Rain might use to facilitate contact with the loas — beads, pictures, musical instruments, bottles of rum. It's here that she'll perform ceremonies to summon the loas when her *societe* needs her help.

JURYRIG

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 [1]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
15	CON	10	12-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
23	INT	13	14-	PER Roll 14-
13	EGO	6	12-	ECV: 4
13	PRE	3	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
14	COM	2	12-	
7	PD	5		Total: 13 PD (6 rPD)
6	ED	3		Total: 12 ED (6 rED)
4	SPD	12		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
5	REC	0		
30	END	0		
23	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 78

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Flight: 15"/30"

Cost	Powers	END
98	<i>Homemade Gadgets:</i> Variable Power Pool (Gadget Pool), 80 base + 40 control cost; Focus (all powers bought through VPP must have at least -½ worth of this Limitation; -½), Only Technology-Based Powers (-¼), Can Only Be Changed In Juryrig's Laboratory (-½)	var
12	<i>Padded Costume:</i> Armor (6 PD/6 ED); OIF (-½)	0
7	<i>Helmet Polarized Lenses:</i> Sight Group Flash Defense (10 points); OIF (-½)	0
15	<i>Jetpack:</i> Flight 15"; OIF (-½), Gestures (needs one hand to steer throughout; -½), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily recharged with jet fuel, 1 Hour; -0)	[1cc]
10	<i>Helmet Radar Array:</i> Radar (Radio Group), Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees); OIF (-½), Affected As Sight Group As Well As Radio Group (-½)	0
3	<i>Helmet Thermal Imagers:</i> Infrared Perception (Sight Group); OIF (-½)	0
6	<i>Helmet Telescopic Lenses:</i> +6 versus Range Modifier for Sight Group; OIF (-½)	0
10	<i>Helmet Magnification Lenses:</i> Microscopic (x1,000) with Sight Group; OIF (-½)	0
2	<i>Helmet Ultrasonic Sensor:</i> Ultrasonic Perception (Hearing Group); OIF (-½)	0
6	<i>Helmet Parabolic Mike System:</i> +6 versus Range Modifier for Hearing Group; OIF (-½)	0

Talents

5	Eidetic Memory
3	Lightning Calculator

Skills

9	+3 with any Electronics, Inventor, and Mechanics
9	+3 with gadgets from Gadget Pool
10	+2 with Intellect Skills
3	Breakfall 13-
3	Bugging 14-
3	Combat Piloting 13-
5	Computer Programming 15-
3	Cryptography 14-

- 3 Demolitions 14-
- 5 Electronics 15-
- 9 Inventor 17-
- 3 AK: Vibora Bay 14-
- 2 KS: High Tech Firms Of The Southeast 11-
- 2 KS: VIPER 11-
- 1 Language: Japanese (basic conversation; English is Native)
- 3 Lockpicking 13-
- 3 Mechanics 14-
- 3 SS: Robotics 14-
- 3 SS: Physics 14-
- 3 Security Systems 14-
- 3 Systems Operation 14-
- 2 TF: Helicopters, SCUBA, Small Planes
- 2 WF: Small Arms
- 3 Weaponsmith (Energy Weapons, Firearms) 14-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 272

Total Cost: 350

200+ Disadvantages

- 15 Dependent NPC: Courtney James (girlfriend) 8- (Normal, Unaware of Juryrig's Social Limitation: Secret Identity)
- 15 Dependent NPC: Augie (lab "sidekick" and assistant) 11- (Incompetent; Useful Noncombat Position or Skills)
- 25 Hunted: VIPER 11- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)
- 20 Hunted: Guy Sweetland 11- (Mo Pow, NCI, Limited Geographical Area, Capture/Kill)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Thrillseeker (Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Prankster (Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Interferes With VIPER Whenever Possible (Common, Strong)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Prefers to Use His Own Devices (Uncommon, Strong)
- 5 Rivalry: Professional (other inventors and gearheads)
- 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Damon Armstrong) (Frequently, Major)

Total Disadvantage Points: 350

EXAMPLE GADGETS FOR HOMEMADE GADGETS POWER POOL

Electroblaster: Juryrig's favorite weapon is this blaster pistol, which emits a bolt of electricity channeled down an aiming laser.

Energy Blast 12d6 (60 Active Points); OAF (-1), two Clips of 12 Charges each (-0). Total cost: 30 points.

Blaster Rifle: When it's time to pull out the big guns, Juryrig brings along this weapon, an advanced version of his Electroblaster. He tries not to carry it as his only weapon, since it's awkward to fire and has a limited battery.

Energy Blast 16d6 (80 Active Points); OAF (-1), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), 8 Charges (-½). Total cost: 27 points.

Smokin' Grenades: Juryrig sometimes carries these grenades, which he uses to blind his foes so he can pick them off easily from the air. The lenses in his helmet are specially calibrated to see through the chemical smoke.

Darkness to Sight Group 5" radius, Personal Immunity (+¼) (62 Active Points); OAF (-1), Range Based On STR (-¼), 6 Charges (-¾). Total cost: 21 points.

Sunburst Grenades: Juryrig loves using these grenades. His helmet lenses can compensate for the effect, so he has no qualms about simply dropping one at his feet when he's surrounded by VIPER agents or other foes.

Sight Group Flash 6d6, Area Of Effect (12" Radius; +1½) (75 Active Points); OAF (-1), Range Based On STR (-¼), 6 Charges (-¾). Total cost: 25 points.

Force Field Belt: This prototype protective device doesn't yet work quite as well as Juryrig would like. Ultimately he not only wants to strengthen the force field, but make it work consistently; enhancing the battery would also be useful.

Force Field (12 PD/12 ED/6 Power Defense) (30 Active Points); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 15- (-¼), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily recharged via any electrical outlet, 20 Minutes; -¼). Total cost: 15 points.

Invisibility Belt: Another prototype, this gadget bends light waves around Juryrig so no one can see him. He loves using it, though he admits it still needs some work.

Invisibility to Sight Group (20 Active Points); OIF (-½), Activation Roll 15- (-¼), 1 Continuing Fuel Charge (easily recharged via any electrical outlet, 20 Minutes; -¼). Total cost: 10 points.

Jetpack Augmentor: Sometimes Juryrig needs to fly really fast.

Flight +5", x8 Noncombat (20 Active Points); OIF (-½). Total cost: 13 points.

Background/History: Damon Armstrong was born in Panama City in 1979. From an early age it was clear he was going to be a gifted mechanic or engineer. He started taking apart his electronic toys by the time he was four, and within a few years he was building new toys out of pieces of other ones. Despite his aptitude for building and designing gadgets, he was only a mediocre student, frequently in trouble in school for pranks and truancy. He barely graduated from high school, and then began taking night classes in electrical engineering at a local trade school while working days in a stereo repair shop.

The work wasn't exactly fascinating to Damon, but it didn't matter. It paid the rent while he worked on a special project in a small garage he'd rented

in Vibora Bay: the “hovervan,” a flying vehicle the size of a car that created an inverse graviton field and combined it with rockets so it could fly at great speeds with remarkable maneuverability. He worked on the hovervan night and day for nearly two years, sinking every dime he had into the construction of a working model he could show to various businesses or government agencies.

In the fall of 2002, the hovervan was almost finished. Damon had just finished another long day of rewiring tape decks, and looked forward to an evening spent tinkering with the exact balance of the rocket array. When he returned home, however, he was stunned to see that he’d been the victim of a burglary. The lock on his door was pulverized, his desk overturned, his tools smashed — and worst of all the prototype, almost a thousand pounds of metal, wiring, and tubing, was gone! Damon was stunned. He hadn’t discussed the project with anybody yet, so who could have done this? And what would he do now? His life’s savings, meager as they were, had been sunk into the hovervan. There was no way for him to start over — it would take years before he could afford the basic components again.

Damon’s depression lasted for weeks. He sleepwalked through work, and alienated his family and friends by refusing to talk to them about his problems. Then, one evening, he was idly watching television when a news report described a violent battle going on out on the Twenty Freeway north of the city. Damon bolted upright as he watched several UNTIL agents by the side of the road, firing at a floating van mounted with a massive blaster that was firing back at them. The van maneuvered with rockets, nimbly avoided the return fire, and swept off over the treeline into the distance. *His* van. With an enormous snake symbol painted on the side.

Damon was overwhelmed by a cold rage. VIPER had stolen his device and was using it to commit crimes. No wonder the police had been less than useless! Inspired once again, he returned to his garage and set about building a small arsenal of weapons and other devices. He still didn’t have much money, but he found he could perform wonders with small pieces and bits of electronics he found in the junkyard next door or in the trash at work. When he wasn’t building devices and training himself in using them, he was at the library, researching VIPER’s techniques, tactics, and devices.

2003 saw the debut of a new costumed adventurer in Vibora Bay. Damon now called himself Juryrig, and he dedicated most of his time to being a thorn in VIPER’s side. His earliest exploits were mixed successes, but he soon figured out how to tap VIPER’s internal comm systems. From that point on began a campaign of harassment that has put him squarely on the local Nests’

most wanted lists. At the same time, he occasionally found opportunities to use his gadgets for other good deeds, thwarting the odd robbery and rescuing people from fires. Over the last year, he’s picked up a “partner” in August “Augie” Gonzalo, a local kid who used to hang out in the same junkyard and now helps Juryrig around the garage, and a new girlfriend, Courtney McCallum, who Damon is starting to care about very much (though she doesn’t know about his costumed exploits). Juryrig himself is earning a reputation as a fun-loving hero with a wicked and somewhat juvenile sense of humor — he’s delivered more than one angry would-be bank robber to the police coated in flour, painted safety-orange, or wearing a spray-painted sign reading “Juryrig kicked my butt!”

Personality/Motivation: Juryrig didn’t start his heroic career with the most noble of motivations, and where VIPER is concerned he still holds a grudge of epic proportions. On the other hand, he’s slowly discovering that saving lives and helping people feeds a spiritual need he didn’t know he had, and eventually he may grow into a very good hero indeed. That is, of course, if VIPER lets him — he’s become so adept at making a nuisance of himself that the local Nests are preparing to devote some serious resources to eliminating him.

In person, Juryrig is sort of charming — he’s quick-witted and energetic, though his sense of humor was honed on years of Bugs Bunny cartoons and MTV. He veers from appropriate self-confidence to borderline arrogance, especially where his inventing skills are concerned.

Quote: “Oh man, you should have seen the looks on those VIPER idiots’ faces when I busted out the Electrobaster while they were standing in that puddle. Oh this? Yeah, I made it from an old hair-



dryer and a soldering iron....”

Powers/Tactics: Juryrig’s powers are limited to the gadgets he comes up with in his garage — the only mainstays so far are his jetpack and helmet. He’s been idly working on a force-field generator for his belt, based on the latest research out of Millennium City; once he gets a final reliable version working, it’ll probably join his regular arsenal, but for now he only occasionally uses a prototype (built out of his VPP). He designs various weapons built from common household appliances and high-tech components he scavenges — while he’s pretty versatile, he’s also shown he prefers weapons that allow him to make a big, showy entrance, like Energy Blasts and Flashes. He dislikes using anyone’s technology but his own, and as a result has foolishly ignored a treasure trove of gadgets he could have taken from defeated VIPER agents.

Juryrig hasn’t developed much in the way of tactics yet. He tends to use his various sensors to scope out a situation while airborne, then come in blasting. Clever opponents will soon start to use this against him, though he’s certainly smart enough to learn some subtlety if he survives his first few mistakes.

Campaign Use: Juryrig is a useful NPC contact for a team without a tinkerer of its own, though he comes with a sizable problem. He really doesn’t understand the magnitude of the enemy he’s made in VIPER, since he’s mostly been exposed to the local Nests and their ordinary agents so far. It won’t take very much more interference in their operations to justify a visit from some bigger guns, whether Dragon Branch

supers or specialized agents aiming for Juryrig personally, and despite his various skills he’ll quickly be in over his head. Hopefully by then the PCs will owe him a favor or two....

You have two basic options if you want to make Juryrig more powerful. First, you can give him a *Power Skill*, *Gadgeteering*, and alter his VPP so he can create gadgets “on the fly” in combat. Second, you can give him more gadgets outside his Power Pool (see the examples above for some ideas). To weaken him, reduce the Pool of his VPP, and remove or reduce some Skills.

Juryrig isn’t yet serious enough about crime-fighting to Hunt anyone other than VIPER (and even that he does in a pretty disorganized sort of way).

Appearance: Damon Armstrong is a handsome young man, 5’11” with a thin but athletic build. He has bright blue eyes and brown hair he keeps close-cropped (so he doesn’t have to spend any time on it). He dresses sloppily, in jeans and flannel work shirts over t-shirts with the logos of rock bands on them. His costume consists of a brown jumpsuit (like a garage mechanic would wear) with assorted small devices hanging from a tool belt or jammed into pockets and heavy work boots. His “jetpack” is constructed from a small lawnmower engine mounted in a harness, with a steering shaft that projects from his right side and has a knob with small controls on the end. His identity-concealing, metallic helmet fits snugly on the top half of his head, with assorted lenses and other paraphernalia that slide down over his goggled eyes.

VIBORA BAY UNDERWORLD



Like most major cities in the United States, Vibora Bay has a problem with organized crime. There are several small gangs and independent operators in the city, but everyone working on that side of the law recognizes that there are two major powers in Vibora Bay's criminal underworld, and that success or failure in criminal endeavors depends greatly on one's relationships with both.

MUNDANE CRIME

For the average Viboran, supervillains aren't nearly as much of a concern as street gangs and other mundane forms of organized crime.

The Sweetland Family

Easton's most powerful crime boss is Guy Sweetland, owner and Head Chef of the world-famous Sweetland's Restaurant on the eastern edge of the Financial District (see page 99 for more details). He maintains the facade of being just a restaurateur, but it's widely accepted throughout the city that he's a leading mobster — the cops just can't prove it yet.

Though he's well-known in the city, Sweetland rarely appears in public anymore. The occasional hint in the press that he might be "connected" only adds to his notoriety. The police suspect he's more than "connected," but have been unable to prove anything substantial. Sweetland has proven he's willing to litigate any public slander of his good name that goes beyond titillating hints — indeed, there are plenty of Viborans who fear his lawyer, Bertram Calloway, considerably more than they do Sweetland himself. Several persons loosely associated with Sweetland were arrested when Commissioner Paris's payoffs were exposed, but the authorities never uncovered any evidence that Sweetland himself was involved. The public widely believes he was in back of it all, but Sweetland's official record remains clean.

Sweetland, who weighs over three hundred pounds despite standing only about 5'7", can usually be found at home or in his restaurant. His wife Lenore is a lazy former model who's gotten spoiled and overweight as she's aged — she and Guy barely speak any more, and he's well-known for taking regular mistresses. They have four children, Sofia (34), Neil (31), Clay (25), and Althea (17).

Guy's personal inner circle also includes his bodyguard Titus (an enormous black man with muscles that put most bodybuilders to shame), his maitre'd

Jean-Claude Dupuy (a snooty man with a pencil-thin mustache and unplaceable accent), and his manager Samara Bellar (an exotic-looking woman with long black hair and exquisite fashion sense).

Clark Robinson

Clark Robinson is the leader of a collection of gangs that control Weston. Unlike Guy Sweetland, he has a criminal record for various minor offenses and a few assaults, but the VBPD has never been able to gather all the evidence it needs to put him away for good. He's not as widely known in the Queen City as Sweetland is, but people who pay attention to current events know his name as an "alleged underworld figure."

The son of a Black Panther and a former member of the Nation of Islam, Robinson brings organization and discipline to a factionalized and somewhat motley collection of gangbangers. He runs his legitimate businesses from his offices at 550 Charlotte Street in Midtown, one of Vibora



Bay's tallest buildings. He's 43 years old, 6'5" tall, thin, and dresses in immaculately-tailored suits of muted colors, but always has a colorful handkerchief showing in his chest pocket.

According to police theories, Robinson's organization descends from a number of street gangs that were influential in the city during the turbulent Sixties and Seventies, most notably a gang called the Shadows. The Shadows, who were heavily influenced by the various Black Power movements of the times, originally expanded their interests beyond simple street crime when they began trying to acquire weapons for various groups planning on using them for armed revolution. The predicted uprisings against the government never occurred, but the Shadows discovered they could make big money in the gun business. They turned impressive profits arming drug dealers bringing in South American cocaine in the Eighties, gradually "acquiring" several criminal operations until they were powerful enough to start forcing gangs to work with them. The VBPD believes Robinson has led this underworld coalition since about 1995. He calls his organization the Big Picture; it's also known as the New Shadows or Shadow Tower (after its headquarters), the Weston Gang Nation, or simply the Weston Mob (the police prefer the latter name).

ROBINSON'S TOP MEN

The VBPD's files on Robinson say his top aides include:

Colton Dreggs: Until a few years ago Dreggs was the "street captain" of the Money Kings, one of the city's most-feared street gangs, who trace their lineage

back to a faction of the original Shadows. Though the gang is racially mixed, like Dreggs most of its highest-ranking and oldest members are black. Robinson relies on Dreggs and his followers to keep him in touch with events on the streets. Dreggs is a bald black man in his early thirties, who favors baggy but expensive suits and large gold rings. He wears black sunglasses everywhere.

Courtney Olmacher: Olmacher serves as Robinson's "spiritual advisor," rarely speaking in public but always lingering after meetings for a private word in his ear. A middle-aged man of uncertain race (perhaps Indian or Pakistani), Olmacher is short, with close-cropped hair and piercing brown eyes. He has a air of authority about him, even though most of Robinson's other employees and associates have never heard him say a word out loud.

Marcello Bocchieri: Bocchieri is Robinson's personal bodyguard. A tall Italian man in his mid-forties with silver hair, he moves quickly and precisely, almost like a cat. How he got mixed up with Robinson's mostly black and Hispanic organization is unclear. He's well-known for being cautious (nearly to the point of paranoia) and as a remarkably accurate shot.

ROBINSON'S GANGS

Apart from the Money Kings, several other street gangs owe direct allegiance to Robinson and the Big Picture, including the 22nd Avenue Playas (whose turf is primarily centered around Union Station and the poorer tenements north of it), the Cobras (a smaller gang that's developing a name for itself with its violent behavior), and the Imperial Posse (a Hispanic gang primarily based in nearby



Panama City, but with members active in Catalina's Cuban and Dominican neighborhoods). All of these gangs derive a considerable level of respect on the street from their association with the Big Picture, and all are reasonably loyal.

The Sovereign Sons

The gang picture in Vibora Bay was complicated in the mid-90s by the arrival of the Sovereign Sons, a large, well-armed gang of criminals from Jamaica, the Dominican Republic, and a few other Caribbean nations. Not only willing, but seemingly eager, to use violence as a tool of commerce, the Sons eliminated several smaller gangs and clashed briefly (and bloodily) with the Big Picture before settling down to rule the Weston territories they'd claimed by right of conquest. Since then a tense truce, occasionally broken by turf wars that usually peter out after a month or two, has prevailed... but the authorities know this state of affairs can't last forever.

The Sovereign Sons are mainly involved in drug dealing, though they also commit robberies and have apparently established some protection rackets. They dominate the crack cocaine trade in Weston, often controlling prime dealing spots that aren't strictly within their "turf" (since other gangs have learned that fighting the Sons over a street corner here and there usually isn't worth it). They also sell some designer drugs, including the infamous narcotic Blaze, though their source for such wares remains unknown.

THE BARON

The leader of the Sovereign Sons is a mysterious man known only as "the Baron." According to the reports of the few law enforcement officers who've seen him, he's a tall, handsome, light-skinned black man of indeterminate age. In contrast to his followers, who wear street clothing, he dresses in expensive men's suits and has large gold rings on three of his fingers. He doesn't carry any weapons openly, but gives the impression he has no trouble looking out for himself. He speaks with a deep-voiced Jamaican accent.

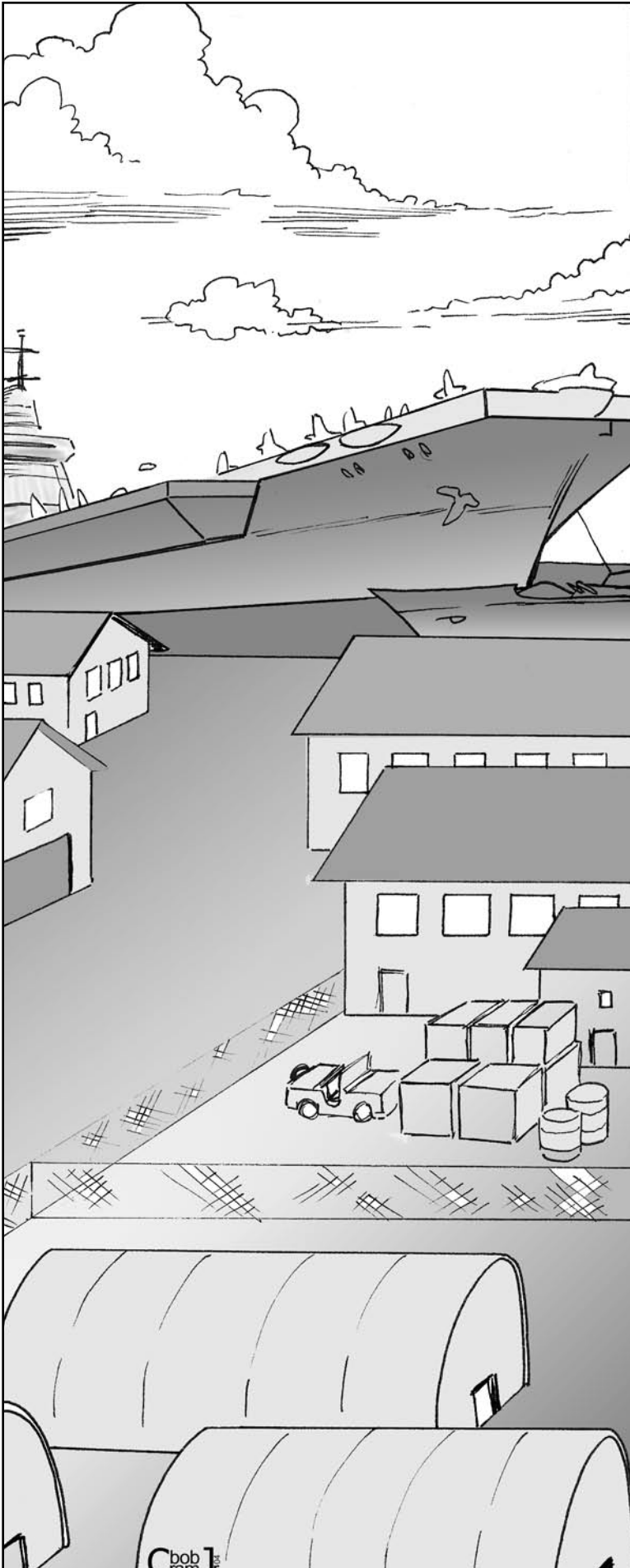
On the street, rumors abound about the Baron. It's said he got his start in political streetfighting in Kingston, coming to the States only after he decided there was more money to be made here than in Jamaica. Despite the fact that no one claims to have actually seen him do anything to anyone, most of the underworld seems to not only respect, but fear him — it's said he has the power to kill with just a touch, and can curse his enemies from afar with some sort of "hex power." The rest of the Sovereign Sons obey him without question, unhesitatingly sacrificing their lives for him if he asks it.

Other Street Gangs

The Big Picture and the Sons aren't the extent of Vibora Bay's gang problem. The Queen City is plagued by several other street gangs of varying levels of sophistication. The most notable include:

Tha VB Mob: The largest rival to the various Big Picture gangs in Weston after the Sons, Tha VB Mob has forged an uneasy truce with both groups





and carved out its own small territory near Cypress Grove Park, where members sell various narcotics.

White Warlocks: This neo-Nazi skinhead gang is neither large nor well-organized, but makes up for these failings by being enthusiastically violent. It's primarily centered around a few bars in the Easton Shore and Walton Bayview neighborhoods.

Trey Kings: The Treys (whose symbol is a stylized number "three" of uncertain origin) are a racially-mixed gang primarily based in Panama City, where they're rivals to the Imperial Posse. Since the IPs are part of the Big Picture, the Treys have made overtures to Guy Sweetland's lieutenants on the streets of Easton. But so far he dismisses the idea of allying himself with "a bunch of punk kids."

The Answer: This small collection of Islamic blacks consider itself the rightful descendant of the original Shadows. The authorities don't know much about them yet, but Robinson himself seems to have taken an interest in their activities.

The Dogz: Based in the easternmost reaches of Walton Bayview, the Dogz are little more than a loose collection of castoffs and rejects from the neighborhood's other gangs who've banded together for mutual protection and the odd minor burglary. Some members have grandiose dreams of building the Dogz into a criminal force in the city, as unlikely as that seems.

SUPERHUMAN CRIME

Vibora Bay's ordinary criminals are bad enough, but unfortunately the city has to cope with a relatively high level of superhuman crime as well. Several of the most notorious supervillains of the Champions Universe have spent at least some time operating in Vibora Bay, though none of them limit their activities to the city. Zephyr (*Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks*, pages 216-17) recently moved to the city. She quickly earned the ire of the local police, though she also made herself a heroine in the eyes of some by using her powers to blunt some of the effects of Hurricanes Frances and Ivan in 2004 (though she seems to have done it as much to show up the incompetence of the authorities as to be helpful). Esper (*Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks*, pages 143-44) has spent a lot of time in Florida, largely so she can harass NASA operations, and Vibora Bay is one of the cities she rotates through periodically. Hornet (*Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks*, pages 161-162) likes the high level of insect life and activity in the Queen City. He's encountered Black Mask on several occasions, and she's always defeated him, so he's nursed a grudge for a couple of years now. At different times, mystical villains like the Black Paladin (*Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks*, pages 126-28), the Leech (*Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks*, pages 168-69) and Morningstar (*Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks*, pages 182-84) have also passed through town.

A few supervillains are specifically associated with Vibora Bay. The Cirque Sinister team has

perpetrated a wide variety of crimes throughout the city and region since late 2003, often committing strange acts of vandalism (which they apparently think of as “art”) in the process. The enigmatic criminal known as Mr. Gemini, who has the ability to manifest a “twin” of himself, has defied all of the VBPD’s efforts to catch him since his first appearance in 2000; he mostly commits robberies, some of them very high-tech and sophisticated, usually with the help of a small gang.

Costumed Criminals

Vibora Bay is also occasionally plagued with villains who have neither superhuman abilities or advanced technology to aid them in their crimes, but nevertheless have posed significant threats to the innocents of the city.

Poison Pen

Among the most notable of these is Conrad Penn, better known by his *nom du crime* of Poison Pen. Penn was a writer and theater critic whose hatred of lowbrow entertainment eventually drove him into murderous insanity. He began his campaign of aesthetic terror by murdering actor Alfred Schwarzenheimer, insisting in a letter to the *Banner* that he had in fact done the world a great favor by preventing Schwarzenheimer from appearing in any more awful, explosion-filled action movies. He then attempted to murder white rapper Juju B during a concert at Hammerhead Stadium, but was thwarted and captured by Black Mask. Penn was declared insane and placed in a mental hospital, from which he has escaped several times to attempt to exact revenge on those he considers guilty of “artistic crimes.” He’s been captured most frequently by Black Mask, though several other heroes have encountered him at least once.

The Sneak

Another non-powered criminal who’s been active in Vibora Bay for some years is a jewel thief and second-story man referred to by the press (and his online fan club) as The Sneak. Though some claim the only way the Sneak could possibly get away with his outrageous burglaries and thefts (from some of the most well-guarded buildings and institutions in the city) is with superpowers of some sort, the evidence shows that the Sneak has only tremendous athletic skills, mastery of lockpicking and security systems, and some handy equipment to help him pull off his crimes. The Black Mask has kept him from succeeding in several of his escapades, but as yet has not brought him to justice.

Trader Jack

The last costumed criminal of note is the criminal benefactor named Trader Jack. This mysterious old man has acted as a supplier of weapons, hired muscle, and information to a number of under-



world figures, including on occasion both Guy Sweetland and Clark Robinson. The only payment he accepts is barter — cash he considers completely unacceptable, and he regards any effort to pay him as a personal insult. The item or fact bartered must be unusual, rare, or particularly interesting, even if it’s of no particular apparent value to anyone at the time. He’d happily exchange a case of grenade launchers for the name and address of a top politician’s secret mistress, or the name of the man who really shot Reagan in exchange for the secret identity of a local superhero.

Despite the trove of information he possesses, Trader Jack seems to have no particular paranormal powers beyond his enormous list of contacts and people who owe him favors. Only a handful of people know how to reach him to discuss a trade, and they tend to keep the secret dear. He’ll work with anyone if the price is right, but to this point he’s favored working with those on the wrong side of the law.

Supercriminal Organizations

Superpowered criminals aren’t the only threat superheroes have to confront in Vibora Bay. Some of the world’s most insidious criminal organizations, such as VIPER and DEMON, have a presence in the city.

VIPER

Despite the city’s name and general infestation of serpents, VIPER is not as prevalent in Vibora Bay as it once was. In 1999 the authorities, aided by several superheroes, smashed a large Nest called “the Compound” just north of the city limits near Far Weston. The Nest Leader, a flamboyant man named Sergeant Serpent, died in a hail of police gunfire, and well over three-fourths of his men were captured. Since then VIPER hasn’t been a major presence in the Queen City. But it’s by



C bob
ram Jr

no means absent, and neither the VBPD nor any superheroes have had any luck tracking down other Nests. Juryrig has developed a knack for breaking up VIPER crimes, but has yet to strike a truly significant blow against the snakes.

DEMON

Vibora Bay's history of mysticism and numerous locations and items of power have made it of great interest to DEMON for decades. Over just the past thirty years, at least half a dozen Demonhames have been founded, gone about their Satanic busi-

ness for some period of time, then run afoul of the city's superheroes and been smashed.

Beginning with the turn of the century, DEMON seems to have stepped up its activities in the Queen City. Robberies at several museums have netted it valuable artifacts (though not ones with any known mystic properties), and several seemingly ordinary "self-help groups" have turned out to be fronts for DEMON cults. Doctor Ka suspects the existence of at least one Demonhame in the Weston area, and probably one more outside the city in San Sebastien Swamp, but despite many long hours of astral reconnaissance hasn't found either of them yet.

Recently the enigmatic Robert Caliburn warned the Black Mask to "keep an eye on" the Morbanes and their black-souled followers. He said he could "feel something *wrong* going on" and believed it involved DEMON — but he couldn't offer any further assistance. Black Mask remains alert for any signs of DEMONic activities, and she has no doubt the Magnum Mage is doing the same.

ARGENT

While Vibora Bay isn't known as a high-tech haven, it's not exactly mired in pre-electronic days, either. It has its share of technology companies and projects, and those sometimes attract the attention of the criminal technocrats of ARGENT. But as far as the authorities know, ARGENT doesn't maintain any sort of permanent base in the Queen City — if it needs something there, it sends a member and/or hirelings to get it.

chapter five:



HOT SPOTS FOR COOL HEROES

HOT SPOTS

This chapter provides detailed descriptions of eight interesting locations that might play a part in any campaign set in Vibora Bay. Players can make these locales part of a PC's origin or daily life; GMs can use them as battlefields, sites where the PCs need to conduct investigations, or inspiration for plots by themselves. See pages 133-36 for campaign use suggestions and plot seeds.

THE MAHOGANY CLUB

Some men view themselves as a breed apart. Whether captains of industry, leaders of men, self-made millionaires, or scions of American capitalist family empires, two things unite them: a deep appreciation for the "golden rule" (*he who has the gold, makes the rules*); and a general agreement that men should pull the strings. The Mahogany Club draws such men like moths to a flame.

Founded in 1881, and one of the last remaining old-fashioned "Gentlemen's Clubs" in the United States, the Mahogany Club provides exquisitely appointed surroundings within a stately marble building in downtown Vibora Bay. Membership is by invitation only, of course, and members' required contributions to the Club's maintenance are considerable. Once accepted, members enjoy the freedom to use the Club's facilities as desired.

The Club's first floor contains the main lounge, kitchens, and administrative offices. The lounge is enormous, covering about two-thirds of the floor's square footage. Overstuffed leather armchairs, antique accent pieces, beautiful chess tables, costly Persian rugs, and ubiquitous servants provide the membership with the ideal environment for self-congratulations and long-windedness over brandy and cigars.

On the second floor, members can enjoy the Club's expansive library — a room full of hard-bound books, leatherbound reading chairs, and hidebound fellow members. The selection leans heavily to the classics. On the opposite side of the floor, a sauna and steamroom give members a place to sweat their cares away. Restrooms, showers, and lockers accompany the spa rooms.

The third floor houses several sitting rooms for members wishing to conduct private business. Also on the third floor are ten luxurious bedroom suites for members who need to spend the night at the Club.

The Mahogany Club limits visits by non-members. Guests must accompany their sponsoring member at all times, and may only access the

lounge and library. Visitors to the Club, provided they hold more cosmopolitan views than the members, can overhear the most amusingly male-chauvinistic discussions.

"We gave them the vote in 1920, and what did that get us?" typical Mahogany Club pomposity goes. "Steady decline of our morals, our principles, our whole way of life. With no mothers in the homes, of course the kids grow up to be animals. We've got to get back to basics, that's the key. Man as the breadwinner and King of the castle, woman as the caregiver and obedient to the husband's decisions. That's the way it's supposed to be." Yes, the members of the Mahogany Club can solve all the world's problems. Just ask them, they'll tell you.

A few years ago, a court ruling held The Mahogany Club's "all-male" membership policy to be unconstitutional. Rather than waste time and money in the legal system, the Club changed the policy without fuss or fanfare. That is to say, they changed the *official* policy. Only two women pressed for an invitation to Club membership, and Club members obliged them both, lest activists accuse the Club of trying to circumvent the court ruling by hiding behind an "invitation only" technicality.

The new female Club members encountered no hostility from their brethren. In fact, they encountered virtually nothing from their brethren. No one treated them rudely, no one directed snide asides their way, and the serving staff bowed and scraped just as low to them as to any other members. They were simply ignored by their fellows. Greetings went unanswered, friendly conversation went unheard, and attempts to join in went universally unacknowledged. After a few weeks of such invisibility, both female members decided to spend their time and money elsewhere. To this day, the Club's membership policy technically allows female members, but existing members don't choose to nominate women, and almost no women seek out invitations anymore.

Andre Lafler serves as The Mahogany Club's current managing director. Responsible for all Club operations, from processing discreet background checks on prospective members to hiring the cleaning staff, Lafler has his hands full catering to the whims of his demanding clientele.

Noteworthy current members of The Mahogany Club include Franklin Colby (grandson of baseball legend and entrepreneur Tyrone Colby), Milton Wanke (one of the mysterious owners of the Crabtree Building, see page 96), renowned attorney Stevenson Long-



worthy, former Mayor Cecil Moors, and — much to current Mayor Richenda Barker's dismay — City Controller Earl Jamison.

STERLING MANOR

Nestled deep within the tree-shaded streets of Oldcorne, one of Vibora Bay's oldest and wealthiest neighborhoods, Sterling Manor is widely considered the city's finest mansion. Despite its grandeur, many Viborans don't even realize it's there. Surrounding houses on all sides make it impossible to see from the street — a small driveway is the only point of entry or exit. That driveway takes visitors past several guest cottages as it winds into the heart of a five-acre estate. At the center lies the magnificent manor, a curious and somehow uniquely Viboran blend of Colonial, Victorian, and Spanish Hacienda styles.

In the last decade of the nineteenth century, Malcolm Sterling arrived in Vibora Bay and began designing and building Sterling Manor. Something of a man of mystery, Sterling gave varying stories about his background. At times he claimed to be nobility of one European nation or another — most often Scotland or England. Other times, he bitterly hinted that he was the bastard son of a captain of Georgia industry, and well-paid to keep his true identity quiet. Still other times, he was an entrepreneurial local boy who'd gone north seeking fortune, hoodwinked countless Yankees, and returned to his childhood home in wealthy triumph. Whatever the truth of his origins, three things are certain regarding Malcolm Sterling.

First, he possessed enormous wealth and always bought the best. Although records of that era aren't always complete, such records as there are show that Sterling paid cash for everything he purchased, from the smallest nail to the land itself. Since he wanted the best land, and of course the best land was occupied, he had to purchase all of the elegant homes he wished to displace. Not only did he do so, he did so at extravagant prices. Even though the homes he bought in this manner were some of the finest in Vibora Bay, he reportedly kept absolutely nothing from them for use in Sterling Manor. Every single item that went into his masterwork was either hand-picked or personally commissioned by him. His insistence on the best extended to his hirelings as well — from master craftsmen to hired laborers, he spared no expense to find and hire the very best from around the world.

Second, he boasted encyclopedic knowledge of architecture and seemingly every building trade. Sterling designed the mansion in every detail, and oversaw every nuance of its construction. Those who worked for him said he clearly had the skill to build the entire manor and everything within, and that he hired craftsman and laborers simply to speed up the process. None of his various histories explained how he acquired such skill, and Sterling chose not to hear questions directed to him on the subject.



Third, he protected his privacy vigorously — even fanatically. During the manor’s construction, Sterling hired different tradesmen for different rooms and projects, sometimes even dismissing them or rotating them to another job in the midst of a project. As a result, virtually no one other than Sterling himself had a full idea of the nature and scope of the completed work. Sterling Manor originally had a wall surrounding the estate, fifteen feet high and guarded around the clock at its only entrance. Years later, as it became clear that the wall was attracting unwanted attention and becoming a challenge rather than a deterrent to those with snoopery or unscrupulous intent, Sterling decided to obtain security through obscurity. In 1909, he bought additional land beyond his estate and hired builders to construct beautiful houses on that land. The resulting homes, with their own trees, grounds, and walls, obscured Sterling Manor almost entirely. Finally he demolished his own wall and replaced it with a dense ring of hedgerows and trees.

Sterling disappeared in 1928. Investigators eventually found a corpse on the estate that had Sterling’s general build and gender, but it was too decomposed to identify. After one year, the state declared Malcolm Sterling dead. To the amazement of the city’s elite, his will showed him to be utterly penniless. It listed no next of kin, and no serious claimant came forward for Sterling Manor, so the city auctioned off the land and home. It has since passed through several hands until its current owners, Julius and Kimberly Galloway, converted it into a venue for weddings and other special events in the late 1980s. A noted real estate mogul, Julius Galloway purchased Sterling Manor primarily to give his bored wife something to concentrate her energies on while he was busy making millions; he spends little time at the estate.

Perhaps the most perplexing question about Malcolm Sterling and his unusual home concerns its very reason for existing. By all reports, Sterling had no wife or children and never entertained. So why did he need such a huge, elaborate home? Historians (and less reputable theorists) offer many possible explanations for Sterling’s estate, demeanor, and disappearance. These include:

- Sterling was an alchemist, funding his construction with manmade gold and concealing more alchemical secrets within his mansion. An experiment gone awry resulted in his death.
- Sterling was a mutant immortal, used to luxury and privacy, who faked his own death and moved on when his age began to be conspicuous.
- Sterling was a “front man” who built the manor with instructions and funding from a wealthy occult group. The cabal planned to use it as a meeting place and lodge. His employers have no idea what ultimately became of him.
- Sterling was a time traveler from the future, easily able to learn “primitive” building techniques and replicate paper currency. He used the home as a base for studying that era in Vibora Bay’s history. When he completed his

studies, he simply abandoned the manor and returned to his own time.

- Sterling was a mystic, building his manor to exacting specifications that imbued it with magical energy for his studies. Some mystical catastrophe (of which it’s best not to speak, no doubt) resulted in his disappearance.
- Sterling was a successful treasure-hunter or criminal who moved to Vibora Bay from far away so he could freely spend his ill-gotten booty. His manor elaborately concealed his wealth, which remains hidden in the estate to this day. The treasure’s rightful owner eventually caught up with Sterling and murdered him, then discovered that only Sterling knew exactly where the missing wealth was stashed.
- Sterling was exactly what he seemed to be — a brilliant, deeply eccentric man who refused to discuss his past or motivations for unstated reasons of his own — and Sterling Manor holds no mysteries for modern seekers. Simple disease caused his death, and his own reclusiveness meant it took weeks until anyone missed him.

Serious scholars of the city’s history generally favor the final theory. Most everyone else enjoys entertaining one of the wilder explanations.

KIMBERLY GALLOWAY					
8	STR	11	DEX	10	CON
9	BODY	13	INT	13	EGO
15	PRE	16	COM		
2	PD	2	ED	2	SPD
4	REC	20	END	18	STUN

Abilities: Money: Wealthy; Reputation: finest event hostess in Vibora Bay 14-, +2/+2d6; Conversation 12-; High Society 14-; AK: Sterling Manor 15-; Oratory 12-; Persuasion 12-; PS: Catering 14-; PS: Event Planning 14-

25+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Workaholic; Psychological Limitation: Mildly Snobbish

Notes: Unlike her husband, Kimberly Galloway practically lives at the manor, overseeing every detail of planning for the galas hosted at the grand old mansion. Not a wedding or other event goes by that doesn’t have Kimberly’s stamp on it in some way. Knowing nothing about wedding planning or catering when she began, she worked hard to learn every aspect of her business. For the first decade of its history as a special events site, the Manor made only modest profits. Gradually, word of Kimberly’s dedication and attention to detail spread through the social circles of the Viboran wealthy, and they now view Sterling Manor as *the* place for everyone who is anyone to get married. What began as a diversion for a rich housewife has become an extremely lucrative enterprise in its own right.

GABRIEL'S ALLEY

Off a grimy, sullen street on the Weston side of the waterfront lies an alley. Like other alleys in poorer parts of the Queen City, this one shelters refuse of many kinds... industrial, residential, human. Choked with litter, damp with nameless fluids, and surrounded by tenements seemingly built old, one thing separates this place from other barrel bottoms.

This is Gabriel's alley.

An aged, ageless, black man with white hair and beard, Gabriel is a familiar sight in the neighborhood. His eyes peer out from beneath enormous white eyebrows, twinkling with gentle delight and missing nothing. He has few worldly belongings (not even a last name), but he doesn't seem to miss them. He has his friends — the news vendor, the beat cop, the working girl — and his blanket and threadbare wool coat. His cotton gloves are almost new, just a few years old and a source of pride. Lots of folks haven't got near as much, he's quick to point out.

All the local residents swear they've had Gabriel's cheerful smile gracing their days as long as they've lived there. He looks the same today as he's always looked... same coat, same shoes, same everything — all but his "new" gloves. Even when offered new clothes or help finding a permanent place to live, Gabriel always declines. He's all right, he insists. Someone else *really* needs those clothes or that apartment. Better to pass them along to needy folks. His friends won't let him starve, but there's those as don't have friends, he points out wisely. Those're the folks who need help.

Gabriel is sure to greet any visitor to the street. He has time for everyone — superheroes, saints, sots, sinners — and treats them all the same. Life giving you trouble? Pull up a crate and talk about it. Maybe Gabriel can help you find your way out. He knows more than he lets on, locals say. He must've been a man of learning and letters before he landed here, the speculation goes.

Mostly Gabriel just lends a friendly ear. He says most folks already know what they have to do, and just need some time to talk themselves into doing it. But if you're a rare one, and Gabriel offers you advice, you're best served to take it. Some believe he's got the "second sight"; others say he's just got the wisdom of years. Whatever he's got, everyone agrees Gabriel's a man to listen to.

Plenty of folks find themselves on the street for one reason or another, and most of them end up in Gabriel's alley when they've truly reached the end of their rope. But as Gabriel helps them realize, things aren't all that hopeless. A bit of hard work here, a bit of good fortune there, and they can pick themselves right up again. Yes, many pass through Gabriel's alley on their journeys, but none of them stay. None except Gabriel.

As for the alley itself, some claim it's haunted. Every so often, well-meaning folks come and clean it up, gathering trash and painting over graffiti, while Gabriel looks on with good-natured resignation. Strangely, the alley always reverts to its prior

disarray within days. Gabriel just shrugs. Maybe this is the way it's meant to be.

GABRIEL

5 STR	8 DEX	5 CON
8 BODY	18 INT	23 EGO
20 PRE	14 COM	
1 PD	1 ED	2 SPD
2 REC	10 END	14 STUN

Abilities: Luck 1d6; Conversation 13-; KS: Common Sense and Good Advice 25-; Streetwise 8-; Survival (Urban) 13-

25+ Disadvantages: Age: 60+; Money: Destitute; Social Limitation: Street Person

Notes: Gabriel's age is impossible to determine. He must be at least in his eighties, and he definitely seems to have the wisdom of years, but his optimistic spirit makes it awfully hard to tell. He never strays far from his alley, preferring to remain in his neighborhood with his friends. Maybe he's just a wise, strange, and kindly old man, or maybe he's something more.

THE SIXTH CHAKRA

A brightly lit shop in central Vibora Bay, just a few blocks to the Easton side of High Street, The Sixth Chakra seems an odd place for mystics to gather. Its storefront window prominently displays crystal pendants, aura-cleansing candles, do-it-yourself Wicca books, and countless flavors of tarot cards. Everything about The Sixth Chakra paints it as a place for bored middle class housewives to "find themselves" in New Age fluff while disposing of extraneous cash.

Proprietor Zelia Fromisher stocks The Sixth Chakra with everything the well-appointed psychic bookstore needs. In addition to the bubble-gum mystical paraphernalia in the storefront window, Fromisher sells books on spiritual and quasi-spiritual subjects such as reincarnation, channeling, astrology, and palmistry, as well as books on more "scientific" New Age subjects like precognition, lucid dreaming, and UFOs. She stocks incense and candles. She offers psychic readings from "real" psychics. She hawks ceramic angels and pewter dragons and little silver pentacle necklaces. She plugs meditation videos and recordings full of audio valium. In short, if it seems sufficiently cheesy and at least tenuously related to something mystical, you'll find it in Zelia's store.

The shop features two levels: a full bottom floor, and an upstairs loft about a third the size of the main floor. The main floor holds most of the merchandise, and many customers — even regulars — never bother going up to the loft. The loft houses more scholarly works that might actually contain a few nuggets of value. Despite the wares she sells to the masses, Zelia Fromisher knows something about the occult, and can usually tell when a customer is really looking for useful information. These customers get directed to the loft.

KITSCH DEFENSE?

The Sixth Chakra represents a mystic shop so corny, so filled with ridiculous spiritual quackery, that genuine mystics may experience culture shock upon stepping inside. For comic effect, and to drive home the extent of the store's kookiness, consider requiring mystical characters to succeed with an EGO Roll to avoid rolling their eyes when they enter.

Zelia's assistant is "Cassandra Nightshade" (really, Paulette Gilkey), a nineteen year old junior college student and wannabe goth. Though she assumes an angsty demeanor, "Cassandra" truly has no stomach for rave parties and blood drinking — she limits her "gothdom" to dyed black hair, dark eyeliner with pale foundation, and a morose expression.

In addition to being a way for Zelia to make money, The Sixth Chakra also serves as a meeting place for local mystic dabblers. Though not frequented by anyone of real skill in the magical arts, a small community of self-styled experts — many drawn to Vibora Bay in the first place by its reputation for being a hotbed of mystical activity — use Zelia's store as a venue for meeting like-minded people and exchanging theories about the city's many oddities.

ZELIA FROMISHER

8 STR	8 DEX	10 CON
11 BODY	13 INT	15 EGO
15 PRE	12 COM	
2 PD	2 ED	2 SPD
4 REC	20 END	20 STUN

Abilities: Conversation 12-; KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 12-; KS: New Age Movements And Personalities 14-; Linguist; Languages (Arabic, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Latin, Spanish; all completely fluent [English is Native]); Persuasion 12-



25+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Fascinated By Occult Lore; Psychological Limitation: Loves Entertaining Her Customers (she's more interested in socializing than making money).

Notes: Zelia knows more about the occult than most people outside her clientele would guess, but she's no mystic. With a real gift for languages, she could have been a UN translator or the like if she'd wanted to, but she preferred to learn just the languages she found useful for absorbing old books on occultism. She enjoys interacting with customers, and most of them leave her store happier than when they came in. Zelia considers that high praise indeed. She keeps her ear to the ground concerning mystical goings-on in the city, but she has no actual contacts in the Mystic World, so she mostly comes across only wild rumors and scuttlebutt. Zelia typically wears floor-length dresses with floral patterns, oversized bracelets and earrings, and a half-dozen crystals, pendants, and charms.

THE CRABTREE BUILDING

Located in the heart of Vibora Bay's Financial District, the Crabtree Building remains a dignified example of 1920s architecture. Despite its age, it's still one of the tallest structures in the city, standing twenty-three stories high. Touches of Art Deco style, including polished marble floors, dramatic wall murals, and frosted glass office door windows give the Crabtree a more cosmopolitan feel than most of its neighbors. It looks better suited to Manhattan than Vibora Bay, putting many visitors in mind of a more modest cousin of the Chrysler or Empire State buildings. Turn-of-the-twentieth-century developer and venture capitalist Elias Crabtree organized the building's construction in the hope that adding a bit of New York color near the waterfront would bring New York investment green to the wallets of Viboran businessmen. He died mere days before its completion, and the remaining partners named the edifice in his honor.

It's a Viboran institution now, and residence in the Crabtree Building marks a business with distinction. Diverse firms find homes within, including law offices, accountants, detectives, publishers, jewelers, and many others, all highly respected in their fields. Office space rarely becomes available, and doesn't stay available for long.

Each floor is laid out in an "H" shape, with the elevator lobby forming the crossbar, and two parallel wings on either end of it. A floor may contain as little as one business or as many as twenty-eight. For example, the engineering design company of Alger, Broer, and Cole ("The ABCD Guys") takes up the entire fifth floor, and the headquarters of sporting goods retail chain "Camping, Hiking, and More!" (semi-acronymic for its founders, Croyle, Harris, and Monroe) fills the seventeenth, while the ninth, twelfth, and eighteenth floors each boast a full complement of twenty-eight smaller tenants.

The lobby of the Crabtree Building boasts all the amenities one expects from a grand office tower. Always abuzz with tenants and visitors, the lobby

offers plenty of traffic for the shops it houses. On the other hand, the offices are generally quite private. A simple door with the company's name in black over frosted glass is usually all the visitor sees from the corridor outside. There are exceptions, though; the art studio of Jakusovszky and Jakusovszky allows passersby to watch its work through a large one-way window into its third-floor space.

PEOPLE AND AMENITIES

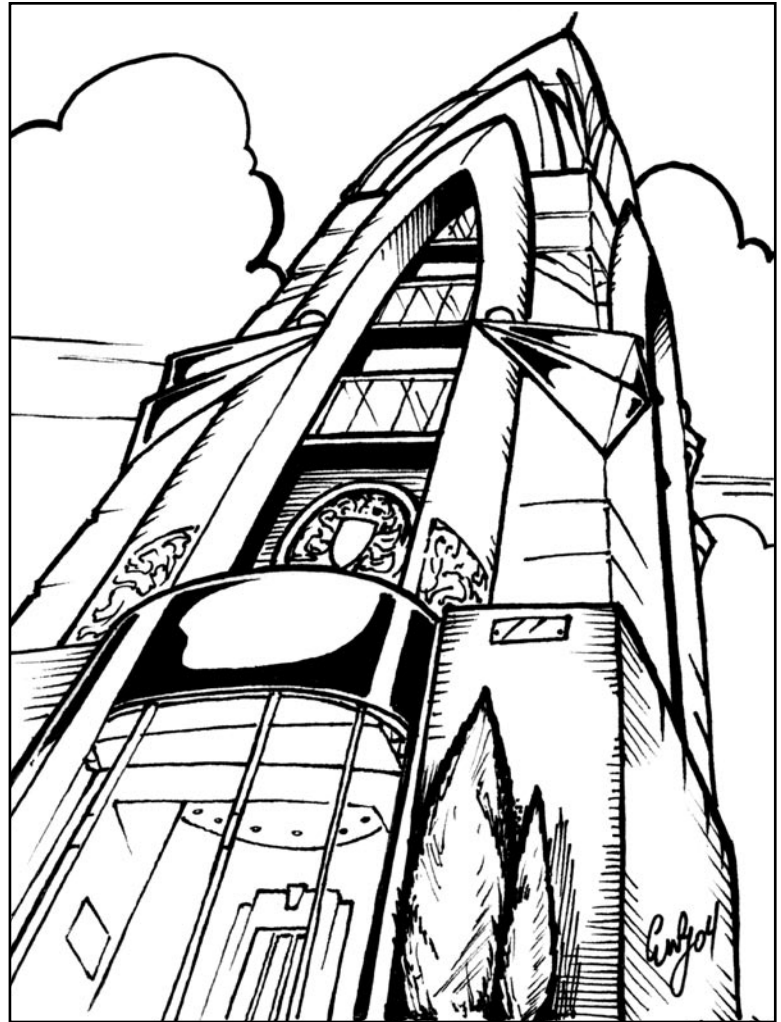
Building Manager Victor Northrup oversees the day-to-day operation of the tower, keeping tenants happy and carrying out the ownership group's wishes. His aristocratic bearing, impeccable manners, and razor-sharp Van Dyke beard seem well-suited to the Crabtree. Lacking the love of bureaucracy and accounting characteristic of most building managers, Northrup operates more like a hotel concierge than a desk-bound paper-pusher. He spends a lot of time on the floors of the building dealing with tenants and staff, and remarkably little time in the comfort of his office.

Vicki Carlisle owns and operates the newsstand. A third-generation news vendor, Vickie thrives on meeting new people and greeting old friends. She stocks all the usual papers and periodicals, both national and local. She also special orders less common fare for tenants upon request, keeping it away from the regular shelves if desired; Vicki is a woman of discretion. She never gossips with tenants about other tenants' affairs, keeping her interactions pleasantly professional. She always has her eyes and ears open, though, and misses very little.

The old-fashioned shoeshine bench offers businessmen a gleam on their footwear for a small fee. Curtis Wicks first worked the bench as a shoeshine boy when he was fourteen, over fifty years ago. He later went on to success as a stockbroker right in this very building, but always missed his stress-free days shining shoes and shooting the breeze with his customers. Building management originally operated the shoeshine station directly, hiring the shoeshine boys and so on. In 1984, with few tenants availing themselves of the service anymore, management planned to close it down. When Curtis learned of the planned closure, he offered to rent the space for a handsome price and operate it himself. For the past twenty years, Curtis Wicks has shined the shoes of the very men he used to work with in the offices above. He's not making nearly as much money, but he couldn't be happier.

Hungry tenants and visitors stop by the Crabtree Café coffee shop. Operated by a large food service company specializing in office cafeterias, the Crabtree Café serves adequate but unremarkable fare for breakfast and lunch, and offers pre-made sandwiches and a few other items on a limited dinner menu.

Janet Garrity runs a small store off the lobby, selling general merchandise such as over-the-counter medicines, greeting cards, candy, stamps, pens, and postcards. Garrity bought the store less than a year ago, and building tenants admire her dedication and deeply appreciate her store's presence. She opens the store as soon as the building opens,



and doesn't close it until the last minute before the building closes.

THE ELEVATORS

Nine elevators serve the building. Eight are modern express elevators, arranged in four pairs of two cars. Each pair shuttles between the lobby and a group of floors. The first pair handles floors two through seven, the second pair handles eight through twelve, the third pair handles floors fourteen through nineteen, and the last pair handles floors twenty through twenty-three, plus roof access.

The remaining elevator, a manually-operated car nicknamed "Teena" by elevator operator Jeremiah Bynham, harkens back to another era. Even though Teena is smaller and slower than the modern cars, and "her" operator expects the appropriate gratuities, many clients prefer Teena to the modern elevators. Some prefer her for nostalgia's sake, others simply because they mistrust modern machinery. Teena stops at any floor Jeremiah takes her to, unfettered by the restrictions on the express elevators.

THE WHITE HARE HOTEL

Located on a quiet side street just outside of the Weston section of the Financial District, the White Hare Hotel is a 150-year old pre-Civil War structure that somehow survived Burnham's bombardment of the city. Although it was once part of a row of luxury townhouses, its formerly pristine bricks are now covered with over a century of accumulated urban grime. Its shake roof shows signs of severe decay, the marble floors of its lobby have turned a ghastly yellow, and rattling air conditioner units jut from its facade like metal pimples on an aging beauty queen's face. It long ago ceased to be a genuine hotel; its rooms are now rented out on a month-to-month basis to local street musicians, bike messengers, panhandlers, pickpockets, and other sorts of downtown bohemian lowlifes.

Yet for many of Vibora Bay's less-prosperous residents the hotel, or more specifically its ground floor bar and grill, are a favorite drinking and dining spot. It's cheap, it never closes, it has excellent food, and it's about a century past its prime... which is how a lot of the city's natives like their nightspots anyway. Its bartenders, who mix their drinks with an eye toward intoxication rather than frugality, are tolerant of (and used to) strange behavior from their customers as long as it doesn't turn violent. The waitresses, Maggie and Evelyn, are surly in a charming, inoffensive sort of manner, with quick wits and easy smiles. The hotel's fare is exclusively Florida Panhandle soul food: red beans and rice, great hunks of cornbread served with homemade butter, two foot long po'boy sandwiches, and many other delicious dishes designed to clog the eater's arteries and dramatically shorten his lifespan.

Another attraction of the White Hare is that it displays a wide variety of museum-quality artifacts for its customers' entertainment. Even its long cypress wood bar has history infused straight into its surface: its counter's slightly "chewed on" look comes from the untold thousands of glasses of imported French absinthe spilled on it during the Victorian period, including more than a few cap-sized by the poet Oscar Wilde during his two-week stay at the hotel. There are bullet holes in the wall behind one dining booth, which has become sort of a shrine to the late (and not so great) local mobster "Blackjack" Israel Jones, who was murdered by a rival in 1934 while enjoying an oyster po'boy in that very spot. This shrine includes not only a collage of news clippings about the late criminal's exploits but the .22 short "Roscoe" revolver that killed him sealed in a glass case. Naturally, artifacts from the American Civil War are in evidence throughout the establishment. Enfield muskets, cavalry sabers, and fading Confederate uniforms are ensconced behind glass cases in the hotel's "grand" dining room, and a cannonball that crashed through the building's roof during the city's bombardment has been welded to several pieces of metal to create an odd-looking candelabra that swings from an iron chain above the drinking area.

The time of day dictates the sort of patrons one is likely to encounter in the White Hare. Breakfast customers typically include secretaries on their way to work from Weston, cabdrivers whose shifts have just ended, bus and cable car drivers whose shifts are about to begin, and teenage club-hoppers in the process of concluding their evening festivities. Lunch or midday patrons are mainly businesspeople on their lunch break, brave or slightly



lost tourists, clerks from nearby shops, and the odd street musician or portrait painter eating his morning proceeds. The dinner crowd tends to be a mixture of the two previous groups with a dash of local bike messengers, construction workers, newspaper delivery drivers, and sailors thrown into the mix. These blue collar customers generally dominate the bar until around seven, when they're replaced by a crowd of hard-drinking lawyers, accountants, reporters, and import/export types who dominate the establishment until midnight. Then the "freak crowd" of strippers, punk rockers, and off-work bouncers drift in for a nocturnal meal.

The hotel has live entertainment on the weekends that performs from a small raised stage nestled into a corner of the bar area. This generally means jazz vocalists, acoustic country musicians, or local blues artists but occasionally rock bands are allowed to perform so long as they keep their volume reasonably low. A number of noteworthy artists have graced this tiny careworn platform including Hank Williams (Senior, of course), Robert Johnson, Tampa Red, Slim Harpo, and local legend Butterfinger Jones. Signed black and white pictures of each of these artists adorn the walls above the stage.

An elderly Haitian woman known only as Aunt Nancy owns the White Hare Hotel. Known amongst the city's homeless for dispensing free meals to the desperate from the back of her establishment, she's also a longstanding member of the High Apostolic Church.

AUNT NANCY

8 STR	10 DEX	9 CON
9 BODY	15 INT	13 EGO
13 PRE	10 COM	
2 PD	2 ED	2 SPD
4 REC	21 END	18 STUN

Abilities: Analyze Occult Ability 13-, Bureaucratics 13-, Contact (local politician), Contact (High Apostolic Church), Conversation 13-, CK: Vibora Bay 13-, Favor (police chief), KS: Vibora Bay History 13-, KS: The High Apostolic Church 14-, KS: Voodoo & The Occult 13-, KS: Local Gossip 14-, Language: English (idiomatic; French is Native), PS: Restaurateur 13-, Streetwise 13-

25+ Disadvantages: Age: 60+; Psychological Limitation: Nosy

Notes: A generous employer as well as a successful businesswoman, Aunt Nancy is highly regarded by those who know her as a kindly philanthropist and antique enthusiast. She most certainly is both of these, but only those who know her best are aware that the elderly restaurateur collects something far more valuable than antebellum southern artifacts: information. She's got ears all over the city, and you never know what interesting tidbits she may uncover.

SWEETLAND'S RESTAURANT

Sweetland's is one of Vibora Bay's most notable and well-reviewed restaurants, a significant accomplishment in a town that takes fine cuisine as seriously as the Queen City does. A massive two-story building sitting on the corner of Pilar Avenue and Sancho de Guerra Street at the outer edge of the Financial District, Sweetland's is easily recognized from the ornate balconies beneath the upper floor's windows. They overhang the sidewalk below and are frequently draped with assorted floral arrangements, bunting, flags, and other displays that change every few weeks. Guy Sweetland, considered by most Viborans to be a mobster (see page 85), actually owns the entire block, including the bar next door, a small hair salon, and several smaller brick office buildings.

Sweetland's caters to the city's most elite residents. It specializes in French cuisine, particularly that of the Anjou region. It also possesses the most exclusive wine cellar (actually a temperature-controlled vault in the building's basement) in the state of Florida — it contains literally millions of dollars' worth of rare imported spirits. It has a meticulous dress code: a tuxedo or business suit for men and appropriately fashionable evening dress for women. No exceptions are ever made to this rule, as the well-documented snubbing of the notoriously casual superstar/superhero Sapphire recently demonstrated. The establishment's entire staff, from the senior *Matre de Table* down to the most recently hired dishwasher, is fantastically snobbish as well as enormously competent. All of Sweetland's waiters speak fluent French and must also memorize verbatim a small book detailing the entire history of continental cuisine, including wine production. The



TUAN CHU

13	STR	11	DEX
10	CON	11	BODY
13	INT	10	EGO
10	PRE	10	COM
3	PD	2	ED
2	SPD	5	REC
20	END	23	STUN

Abilities: Than Vo Dao (Martial Block, Joint Break, Offensive Strike); Breakfall 11-; Bribery 11-; +1 with HTH Combat; AK: The Jumble 12-; Language: English (fluent conversation; Vietnamese is Native); PS: Obtain Videos And Periodicals 16-; Streetwise 11-; TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Two-Wheeled Muscle-Powered Ground Vehicles

50+ Disadvantages: Psychological Limitation: Loudmouth; Psychological Limitation: Mischievous

Notes: Tuan Chu operates a newspaper stand in front of his father's convenience store in The Jumble neighborhood of Vibora Bay. His claim to fame is his unmatched ability to procure any currently published periodical, newspaper, CD, DVD, video, or video game for his customers. If you need a weekly subscription to the *Uzbekistan Times*, he can get it for you... though the price of this service depends on the rarity of the desired item, its geographical distance, and what sort of impression the buyer makes on Tuan. It usually takes him no more than one week to obtain a desired item.

entire staff wears cream-colored uniforms modeled after the classic food service attire of the 1930s.

Although there are other expensive, high-end French restaurants in Vibora Bay, notably L'Enfant Terrible on Ponce de Leon Street and The Left Bank on Duval Street, none of them even come close to being as expensive or exclusive as Sweetland's. The menu is printed without prices; if they're of concern to a customer it's assumed he's in the wrong establishment and is asked to leave. Besides its fantastic selection of wine the restaurant serves a wide variety of fine dishes, including its infamous escargot *de condescendre*, oven roasted *canard de d daigneux*, a noteworthy Parisian almond *complexe de sup riorit *, and a delightful *p tisserie de l che*. House specialties include wild Texan *cheval* steak, freshly strangled *p te de foi gras*, and seared medallions of veal. When multi-billionaire Franklin Stone dined at Sweetland's last year and had the poached oyster served floating on a sabayon of pearl tapioca and osetra caviar, he pronounced it the finest meal he'd had in many years and insisted on meeting the chef who'd created it (who turned out to be Sweetland's top assistant, Laurent de Ancil).

Many of the area's most fashionable and noteworthy denizens can be found dining at Sweetland's, particularly on Friday and Saturday night. The lovely CEO of VTransit, Monique Fontaine, is a regular patron, as is local media mogul Damien Adair. City Councillor Lamont Robinson is often seen here in the company of his personal secretary.

Sweetland's is open seven days a week. It serves breakfast from 7:00 to 10:30 AM, lunch from 11:30 AM to 2:00 PM, and dinner from 6:00 to 11:00 PM. The adjoining bar, Guy's Lounge, is open nightly except for Sundays from 7:00 PM until 2:00 AM. The main dining room seats ninety, the small courtyard behind twenty-five in good weather, and there are two additional rooms upstairs. One is available for private parties of up to fifty, the second is reserved for Guy himself and his personal guests. Rumors claim a large number of shady business deals are resolved there over seared yellowtail snapper and a bottle of Chateau Grillet '95.

MARTY'S PLACE

Marty's Place is a small convenience store located at the corner of 4th and Galleon in the very heart of The Jumble. Pressed innocuously in between a dilapidated apartment building and a machine shop, the store sells a variety of canned and dried goods, liquors, sodas, and a small selection of fresh vegetables from four long shelves that run the entire length of the establishment. The proprietor is one Marty Chu, a heavyset, bald Viet-

namese man in his 60s with a winning smile and a sharp wit. Although presumably mobile, Marty is invariably seated on a stool behind the cash register where he can observe customers (and shoplifters) via a series of mirrors. He also has a series of electronic controls and monitors behind the counter that allow him to lock both the front and back doors, observe the alley behind his store, and record all of the activity in his establishment.

There are several other family enterprises crammed into the dark confines of Marty's store. His brother Frank operates a small lunch counter directly across from the cash register with the help of their father Quang, an elderly man who speaks very little English. They serve typical American fare such as hamburgers and scrambled eggs to customers who sit on a row of six battered steel and pleather stools. In front of the store Marty's wise-cracking son Tuan runs a tiny newsstand densely packed with periodicals from around the world. Popular mainstream daily newspapers such as the *Haiti Star*, *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, *The New York Times*, and all the local papers are available no later than 6:30 AM sharp each morning, as are various weekly and monthly publications. Tuan also carries a goodly number of rather odd publications that are of interest to only a few select local customers such as *Der Arts Arcana*, *The Manichean*, *It Came From Beyond Earth*, *A Mortician's Notes*, and *Post Human Quarterly*. If asked, he can get even stranger publications as well, although nobody knows exactly how he does it.

Groceries, hot dogs, and newspapers aren't the Chu family's only businesses. Marty operates a sort of *de facto* bank for the inhabitants of The Jumble, cashing checks, running tabs for regular customers, holding or loaning small sums of money, and generally providing financial advice to those who request it. Since he exclusively dispenses these services to neighborhood inhabitants, very few people ever try to rip off or take advantage of Marty. While none of these "banking" activities are illegal *per se*, they're definitely a little irregular, so Marty's tightlipped about his business. Actually, all of the Chu family is remarkably quiet with the exception of Tuan, who has an extremely mischievous sense of humor.

Although Inner Weston is generally considered a little dangerous and The Jumble a good bit more dangerous than that, there have been very few attempts to rob Marty's Place. It's no secret that the Chu family are all practitioners of a Vietnamese martial art called Than Vo Dao. The small handful of times someone actually tried to hold up the store went very badly for the would-be armed robbers. The Chu family themselves beat up the first group, while another set of would-be robbers escaped only to get jumped by a motley mob of angry neighborhood residents a block away.

chapter six:



THE VIBORA BAY GM

GAMEMASTERING VIBORA BAY



This section provides some advice and suggestions for running games set in Vibora Bay. But before you can run a campaign in the Queen City, you need to know what's *really* going on behind the scenes.

THE COMING STORM

Vibora Bay is a study in duality: black and white, east and west, man and woman, yin and yang... Heaven and Hell.

In a time before time, God cast Lucifer and the other rebellious angels from Heaven, and they fell far, deep into Hell, where they became demons of great and terrible power. But on their journey to the Netherworld, they had to pass through the earthly sphere... and Vibora Bay is the place they fell "through."

And yet, not all of them Fell completely. There was one, the angel Therakiel, who only half-heartedly rebelled. Minded to obey the will of God, but tempted by the blandishments of the Lightbringer, he could not decide what to do. Lack of loyalty to the Divine Presence was in itself a sort of rebellion, and so Therakiel was cast out of Heaven... but not so far as Lucifer's true followers. As the rebelling

angels fell screaming through Earth to Hell, Therakiel crashed to the ground in the spot that would one day be the site of Vibora Bay.

When the right side of his body hit the Earth, it became broken and maimed, crushed into a horror of mangled angelic flesh by the righteous displeasure of God. And yet his left side, which pointed heavenward and did not touch the ground, was as whole and unspoiled as the forms of those who remained in Heaven.

Therakiel dragged himself from the muck into a cave, and from the cave's mouth deep into the bowels of the earth. There he lay long, healing his shattered body and brooding. He was the ultimate outcast, at home in neither Heaven nor Hell, cut off from his brethren forever. In time his sadness and loneliness turned to anger over the wrongs done him. He was Therakiel the Bright! No one, not even God or Satan, could spurn him this way. If they would have none of him, he would have none of them... and with that thought, his mind conceived a plan.

He knew, as all angels and demons knew, that the Fall meant one day Heaven would war with Hell. A long time coming it would be, but War was inevitable. And it seemed to Therakiel that he who



could control the time and place where the War would be fought could rise above it, leaving behind both destroyed loser and weakened victor to conquer all for himself!

But there was more to the War than battle between two implacably-opposed enemies. Ultimately God and Satan both existed as much in the hearts of Men as in Heaven and Hell. So it was that Mankind would stand between the two enemies and, by his choice, give the greater power, and thus the greater chance of victory, to one side or the other. One Man — one Son of Adam or Daughter of Eve — was fated to serve as the linchpin for this decision. As he went, so would go the War... but no one, not even Therakiel, knew who that Man would be.

Therakiel realized that for his scheme to work, he had to control not only the site of the Final Battle, but the Man who would likely decide its outcome. That meant bringing the Man to him, for he dared not leave his sanctum deep beneath the surface. Only there could he hide from the eyes of God and Satan; to walk the Earth himself would reveal all and spell disaster for his plans. (At best he could hope to act through human proxies, as other angels and demons usually do.)

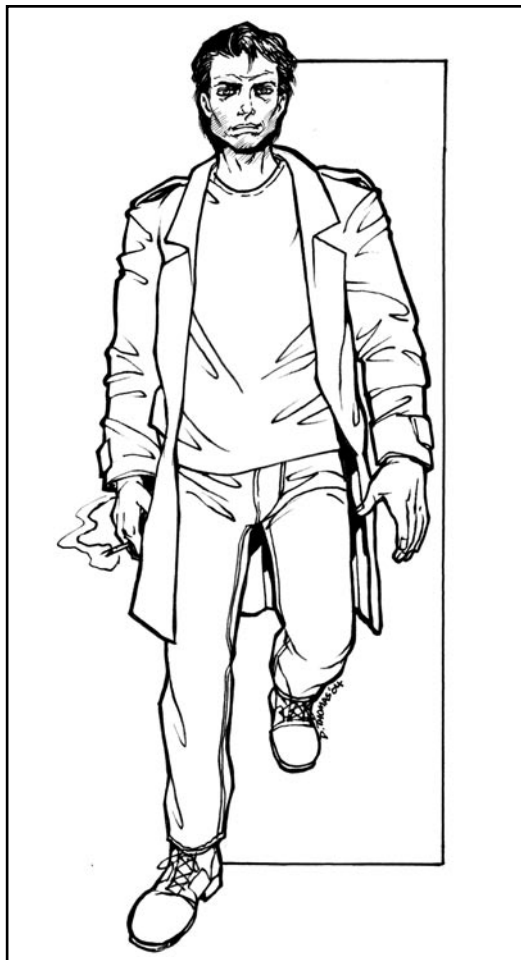
And so, using his own vast powers, Therakiel the Halfway Angel subtly altered the lands above him, changing them to attract arcane energies both fair and foul. He gifted the swamps with awareness; he made the region fertile for enchantments; he caused the land to resonate in ways that would appeal to the mystically gifted. But that was only the first part of his plan — he also had to prepare both sides for their eventual downfall in the War. And so began a campaign of millennia to spread rumors and discord throughout the many spheres, foment minor spiritual conflicts, and create cracks in the ramparts of both Heaven and Hell.

At long last, the Halfway Angel sees that his goal is in sight. All the signs proclaim that the War swiftly approaches, and Therakiel believes he's successfully made Vibora Bay the site of the coming conflict. Each side has been inflamed toward the other, and yet at the same time weakened by the increasingly secular nature of the thoughts of Men. When the clash comes, Therakiel will at long last stride forth, revealing himself and casting down both God and Satan to claim all Reality as his Kingdom.

But there remains the matter of the Choice — and that lies in the hands of a Man the Halfway Angel cannot control, a mysterious mystic named Robert Caliburn.

ROBERT CALIBURN The Magnum Mage				
Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [1]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
18	CON	16	13-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
20	INT	10	13-	PER Roll 13-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
10	COM	0	11-	
10	PD	7		Total: 21 PD (11 rPD)
10	ED	6		Total: 21 ED (11 rED)
5	SPD	22		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
7	REC	0		
36	END	0		
30	STUN	1		Total Characteristics Cost: 120
Movement:		Running:	7"/14"	
Cost	Powers			END
53	<i>Hermetic Theurgy:</i> Variable Power Pool (Magic Pool), 40 base + 20 control cost; all slots Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼) var			
25	<i>The Flame Gem:</i> Variable Power Pool (Fire Magic), +20 base + +10 control cost; OIF (-½), Only For Fire Magics (-½) var			
60	<i>Enchanted Weapons And Combat Talismans:</i> Multipower, 90-point reserve, all OIF (-½)			
4u	1) <i>Consecrated .45:</i> RKA 3d6, +1 STUN Multiplier (+¼), Reduced Endurance Cost (0 END; +½); OIF (-½), Beam (-¼), No Knockback (-¼) 0			
4u	2) <i>Hand Of Shiva SMG:</i> RKA 2d6, Armor Piercing (+½), Autofire (5 shots; +½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +1); OIF (-½), Beam (-¼), No Knockback (-¼) 0			
6u	3) <i>Caliburn's Gunmetal Wand:</i> Energy Blast 9d6, Variable Advantage (+½ Advantages; +1); OIF (-½), 16 Charges (-0) [16]			
40	<i>K-Bar Athame:</i> Multipower, 60-point reserve; all OIF (-½)			
2u	1) <i>Cutting Flesh And Spirit:</i> HKA 1d6 (1d6+1 with STR), Affects Desolidified (+½), Armor Piercing (+½); OIF (-½) 3			
4u	2) <i>Cutting Enchantments:</i> Drain Magic 4d6, any one Magic power at a time (+¼), Delayed Return Rate (points return at the rate of 5 per 1 Minute; +¼); OIF (-½) 6			
6	<i>Bullet With Your Name On It:</i> RKA +2d6 for Consecrated .45, +1 STUN Multiplier (+¼); OIF (-½), Beam (-¼), Each Bullet Only Affects Person It's Keyed To (-1), Creating Bullet Requires Lengthy Ceremony And Blood From Target (-1), 1 Charge (-2) [1]			
	<i>Martial Arts: Commando Training, With Kung Fu Chaser</i>			
	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
3	Aikido Throw	+0	+1	5d6 + v/5, Target Falls
4	Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4	Boxing Cross	+0	+2	7d6

4	Choke	-2	+0	Grab One Limb, 3d6 NND (2)
4	Dodge	—	+5	Dodge all attacks, Abort
4	Escape	+0	+0	40 STR vs. Grabs
3	Joint Lock/Grab	-1	-1	Grab Two Limbs, 35 STR
4	Disarm	-1	+1	Disarm, 35 STR
4	Knife Hand	-2	+0	HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR)
4	<i>Tien-hsueh Strike</i>	-1	+1	3d6 NND (1)
8	+2 Extra Damage Classes (already added in)			
16	<i>Sorcerer's Fatigues</i> : Armor (8 PD/ED); OIF (-½) 0			
15	<i>The Flame Gem</i> : Energy Damage Reduction, 50%, Resistant; OIF (-½), Only Versus Limited Type Of Attack (fire; -½) 0			
12	<i>Leave My Soul Alone, Dammit</i> : Power Defense (12 points) 0			
6	<i>Hermetic Resilience</i> : Life Support (Diminished Sleep: only needs about 8 hours of sleep per month; Diminished Eating: only needs to eat about once a month; Longevity: ages at one-fourth normal rate) 0			
2	<i>Swift</i> : Running +1" (7" total) 1			
17	<i>The Third Eye</i> : Detect Magic 13- (no Sense Group), Discriminatory, Ranged, Sense 0			
6	<i>Sharp-Eyed</i> : +3 PER with Sight Group 0			
15	<i>Reality's On My Side</i> : Luck 3d6 0			



10	<i>The Caliburn Tarot</i> : Clairsentience (Sight Group), Precognition, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OAF (-1), Extra Time (1 Minute; -1½), Instant (-½), Precognition Only (-1), Time Modifiers (-½), Vague And Unclear (-½) 0			
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Perks

30	Contacts: 30 points' worth throughout the Mystic World			
52	Follower: Nicotine the Dragon (260 points)			
10	Reputation: mysteriously powerful mystic and person of mystic import (among the Mystic World) 14-, +5/+5d6			

Talents

6	Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)			
15	Danger Sense (self only, in combat) 13-			
3	Simulate Death			

Skills

24	+3 with All Combat			
7	<i>The Flame Gem</i> : +2 with Fire Magic; OIF (-½)			
3	Analyze Magic 13-			
3	Combat Driving 13-			
3	Deduction 13-			
3	Demolitions 13-			
3	Fast Draw (Small Arms) 13-			
2	Gambling (Card Games) 13-			
3	Navigation (Astral, Dimensional) 13-			
3	Paramedics 13-			
17	Power: Magic 20-			
5	Rapid Attack (Ranged)			
3	Shadowing 13-			
5	Stealth 14-			
3	Streetwise 14-			
4	Survival (Temperate, Tropical) 13-			
3	Systems Operation 13-			
3	Tactics 13-			
1	Tracking 8-			
5	TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles, Small Motorized Boats, Helicopters			
7	WF: Small Arms, Blades, Flamethrowers, General Purpose/Heavy Machine Guns, Grenade Launchers, Shoulder-Fired Weapons			
3	Weaponsmith (Muscle-Powered HTH, Firearms) 13-			
3	Linguist			
1	1) Language: Arabic (fluent conversation; English is Native)			
1	2) Language: German (fluent conversation)			
1	3) Language: Greek (fluent conversation)			
1	4) Language: Hebrew (fluent conversation)			
1	5) Language: Hindi (fluent conversation)			
1	6) Language: Latin (fluent conversation)			
1	7) Language: Persian (fluent conversation)			
1	8) Language: Spanish (fluent conversation)			
1	9) Language: Vietnamese (fluent conversation)			
3	Scholar			
3	1) KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 14-			
2	2) KS: Demons 13-			
1	3) KS: Extradimensional Beings 11-			
3	4) KS: Hermetic Theurgy 14-			
1	5) KS: Kabbalism 11-			
1	6) KS: Legends And Lore 11-			

- 1 7) KS: The Military/Mercenary/Terrorist World 11-
- 2 8) KS: The Mystic World 13-
- 1 9) KS: Necromancy 11-
- 1 10) KS: Vampires 11-
- 3 Traveler
- 1 1) AK: The British Isles 11-
- 1 2) AK: India 11-
- 1 3) AK: Mexico 11-
- 1 4) AK: The Middle East 11-
- 1 5) AK: Vietnam 11-
- 1 6) CK: New York City 11-
- 2 7) CK: Vibora Bay 13-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 619

Total Cost: 739

200+ Disadvantages

- 10 Distinctive Features: Mystic Aura (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Detectable Only With Unusual Senses)
- 20 Hunted: Cult Of The Shadow Flame 11- (Mo Pow, Kill)
- 10 Hunted: Valerian Scarlet 8- (As Pow, Capture/Kill)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Must Protect The World From Supernatural Threats (Common, Total)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Must Aid Those In Need (Common, Strong)
- 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Robert Coble, ex-soldier) (Frequently, Major)
- 10 Vulnerability: 2 x STUN from Earth Gem attacks (Uncommon)
- 5 Vulnerability: 1½ x STUN from Chaos and Soul Gem attacks (Uncommon)
- 434 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 739

EXAMPLE POWERS FOR HERMETIC THEURGY POWER POOL

Caliburn can use his VPP not only for normal Hermetic Theurgy (and similar magics), but for fire magics that are even more powerful than his standard spells. In addition to the spells listed here, he often uses his VPP to create talismans, amulets, wands, and other mystic Foci.

Hermetic Theurgy Spells

Blast Of Barakiel: Caliburn calls upon the power of the Angel of Lightning to blast his foes with a thunderbolt from the heavens.

RKA 2d6, Indirect (+¼) (37 Active Points); OAF (amulet; -1), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼). Total cost: 12 points.

Blessing Of Mars: Caliburn conjures the mystic essence of the planet Mars to make himself (or someone else) a stronger, more powerful warrior.

Aid STR 4d6 (40 Active Points); OIF (periapt tied around the right arm; -½), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼). Total cost: 16 points.

Mantle Of Kochbiel: The Angel of Darkness lays his mantle over an area Caliburn designates, creating a field of impenetrable shadow.

Darkness to Sight Group 3" radius, Personal Immunity (+¼) (37 Active Points); Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼). Total cost: 18 points.

Moon Mirage: The Moon represents change, chaos, and trickery, and this spell calls upon those qualities to confuse Caliburn's enemies.

Sight and Hearing Group Images, -2 to PER Rolls, Increased Size (8" radius; +¾) (37 Active Points); OAF (silver amulet in the shape of a crescent moon; -1), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼). Total cost: 12 points.

Saturnian Slowness: Caliburn inflicts the leaden nature of the planet Saturn on his enemies to slow them down.

Drain Running 2d6, Ranged (+½) (30 Active Points); Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼). Total cost: 20 points.

Solar Ward: In Hermetic lore, the Sun is a beneficent "planet," able to protect spellcasters from danger and dark powers.

Force Field (10 PD/10 ED/10 Power Defense) (30 Active Points); OAF (sun amulet; -1), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼). Total cost: 12 points.

Fire Magic

Aura Of Uriel: Caliburn can surround himself with an aura of Uriel's fire of the sun to harm anyone who touches him.

HKA 1d6+1, Continuous (+1), Damage Shield (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½) (60 Active Points); OIF (Flame Gem; -½), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼), No STR Bonus (-½). Total cost: 24 points.

Fire Blast: This spell projects a blast of deadly flame. Usually it's ordinary-looking fire, but Caliburn can change its color as he sees fit, or even weave it into strange shapes (such as fiery spirits or swords).

RKA 4d6 (60 Active Points); OIF (Flame Gem; -½), Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Gestures (-¼), Incantations (-¼). Total cost: 24 points.

Alternate Version I: Energy Blast 12d6. 60 Active Points; total cost 24 points.

Alternate Version II: RKA 2d6, Variable Advantage (+½ Advantages; +1). 60 Active Points; total cost 24 points.

Pyrokinesis: With this spell, Caliburn can control flames — move them, shape them, and even "touch" targets with them to cause damage. (See page 92 of

THE ELEMENTAL GEMS

Caliburn owns one of the four Elemental Gems. Despite their name, they're not associated with the four Aristotelean elements, but instead with the Four Elements of Mankind: the Earth from which he was made; the Soul that God gave him; the Flame of his intellect and creativity; and the Chaos that so often resides within his heart. Caliburn doesn't know who owns the Soul Gem or Chaos Gem (if anyone does at all). The owner of the Earth Gem is an old enemy of his — Bloodstone, the archdruid of a malefic human-sacrificing cult from the British Isles.

Like Caliburn, anyone who owns a Gem is vulnerable to attacks from the other Gems. Each of them is "attuned" to the others (especially its opposite [Fire-Earth, Soul-Chaos]), and this allows more of the force of an attack to affect the target.

Individually, each of the Gems holds great power — Caliburn has only barely begun to unlock the might within the Flame Gem. Were one man to obtain all four Elemental Gems, he would wield ultimate power over the Four Elements of Mankind, and thus over Men. Caliburn (and other right-thinking folk) want to prevent this, since placing such power in the hands of a fallible Man would lead to havoc, destruction, and evil. But he'd like to know where they are so he can keep tabs on them.

CALIBURN THE ARCHMAGE?

In the Mystic World's never-ending discussion of who's going to become the next Archmage, the name "Robert Caliburn" doesn't come up very often. Compared to the likes of Witchcraft, the Demonologist, Rashindar, or Dweomer, he doesn't seem a very likely candidate. But some mystics have pointed out a few interesting facts about him that may bear on the debate.

First, he seems to be the object of some great prophecy, possibly one involving a tremendous conflict. Who's likelier to be at the center of a mystic "war" than the Archmage, defender of Earth?

Second, he claims to have received "gifts" from both Azrael (a resident of Elysium) and Shiva (a resident of Faerie). Mystics who have encountered him indicate that this seems to be true. The Archmage has to receive gifts of power from the major residents of each of the four Quaternion Planes — and that means Caliburn's already halfway there.

Third, he clearly possesses great power. While his Hermetic theurgy often requires lengthy rituals or pre-enchanted talismans, he seems to know how to work spells that affect and improve *guns* — something almost no other mage can even do, much less do at the level of power he displays. That's why they call him "the Magnum Mage." It indicates there's something unusual and special about the man, even compared to most super-mages.

Put all that together, and you just might have a fine candidate for Archmage....

The UNTIL *Superpowers Database* for detailed rules on Telekinesis and energy.)

Telekinesis (30 "STR") (45 Active Points); *OIF* (Flame Gem; -½), *Only Works On Fire* (-1).
Total cost: 18 points.

These Things'll Kill Ya: Caliburn's almost always got a lit cigarette in his mouth — but not just because he likes to smoke. He can also use one as a focus for a surprise fireball spell.

RKA 2d6, *Explosion* (-1 DC/2"; +¾), *Trigger* (flicking the lit cigarette at the target; +¼) (60 Active Points); *OIF* (Flame Gem and lit cigarette of opportunity; -½), *Incantations* (-¼), *Limited Range* (20"; -¼). Total cost: 30 points.

Background/History: In 1971, Robert Coble was a young soldier on patrol in Vietnam. A VC attack separated him from the rest of his unit, and he quickly became lost. Confused, he penetrated further and further into VC territory, eliminating any scouts he encountered along the way. Despite his eventual realization that he was going the wrong way, something seemed to be pulling him onwards, calling to him....

He soon found out what it was as he stumbled into a secluded jungle valley and discovered a hidden temple. Even though it was the middle of the night, somehow the black marble temple seemed to glow, emitting an eerie radiance that at once intrigued and repulsed him. Checking the clip of his M16 to make sure he still had plenty of ammo, he advanced on the building. He found the temple doors wide open, and cautiously made his way inside. He came to a large central chamber where he saw black-robed monks chanting around a black flame. Even to Robert's untrained senses, the monks and their black flame were evil and corrupt — he could somehow sense the foulness of their souls. Set on a small pedestal in front of the flame was a smooth, oval red gem that somehow pulsed with a healthy light that held back — barely — the black light of the accursed flame. The shadow was creeping ever closer, threatening to overwhelm the gem. In his mind, Coble thought he heard the gem speaking to him, urging him to fulfill the first part of his destiny and rescue it.

Well, Robert didn't need any urging to eliminate evil VC cultists. While they were distracted by their chanting, he cut loose with his assault rifle, mowing most of them down and creating such a distraction that he was able to run up, snatch the gem, and flee the temple.

That was the last time any reputable person saw Robert Coble for the next thirty years. Driven by the whisperings of the gem, he journeyed to India, where he studied with Hindu mystics. There he learned his gem was but one of four, each linked to one of the four elements that make up Mankind, each steeped in powers imparted to it by Western mages. From there he made his way to a group of Gnostic mages in the Middle East... then to a kibbutz of kabbalists in Israel... then to the house of Master Graubergen of Germany, who claimed to

have studied Hermetic wizardry under Faust and Cagliostro... then to one of the last surviving circles of druids in the British Isles... then to a deli in New York City, where he learned even more of kabbalism and Hermetic lore... then to the homes of Mexican shamans. And after a third of a century of study and training in which he seems to have aged only a few years, he found himself drawn back to his hometown of Vibora Bay...

Personality/Motivation: Robert, now using the last name Caliburn, is a curious blend of modern soldier and traditional wizard. He fully appreciates the value of the lore he has studied, and knows that there are times when only it can avail him. But at the same time, he hasn't forgotten the value of a good right cross or a bullet or two from his .45 service pistol. In many ways he's as much a street crime-fighting vigilante as he is a mystic protector of Earth.

All of Robert's teachers have impressed upon him a fact which they were all able to sense: he has a destiny to fulfill, one that involves defending mankind from occult menaces. He has a pivotal part to play in some great coming conflict that no one he's spoken to seems entirely sure about. He takes this destiny quite seriously, remaining ever-vigilant for mystic menaces (not to mention threats of a more mundane variety). He has vowed never to ignore a plea for help from someone in legitimate danger.

Given the nature of Robert's magic (see below), his life has taken on a certain spiritual dimension it lacked when he was just a soldier. He has come to appreciate that there are Higher Powers in the worlds, and that he's part of a greater scheme of things. Although he's not exactly a "church-going man," and many supposedly religious people would condemn him as some kind of Satanist, he can often be found sitting in the back pew of a Catholic church, listening and watching (perhaps for something other than what the rest of the worshippers see and hear...).

Despite the sincerity of his beliefs and his devotion to his cause, Caliburn often comes across to others as cynical, world-weary, and sometimes arrogant (in the "I understand what's going on here and you don't" way that powerful mages so often have). His personality may grate on other people at times, but those who take the trouble to get to know him realize what a good friend and powerful ally he can be.

Quote: "Gunfire or the Fires of Heaven. I can kill you with either. Your choice."

Powers/Tactics: Robert Caliburn is a mage who practices primarily in the tradition of Western Hermetic theurgy and kabbalism. He knows the secret names of the angels, and can call on them for a small fraction of their power. He wields the magic of the planets, and can employ their mystic aspects to assist him. He has learned countless rituals to summon extradimensional powers, dispel infernal forces, and work mystic miracles.

Caliburn is particularly skilled at the use of Fire Magic due to his possession of the Flame Gem, which he now wears as part of a talisman underneath his shirt. Someday he hopes to unlock the full powers of the gem; for now, he can only command a tiny fraction of its mystic might. He only knows the whereabouts of one of the other three Gems, but would very much like to find them (see sidebar, page 105).

But the “Magnum Mage” (as he’s often known in the Mystic World) isn’t totally dependent upon his mystic training when the going gets rough. He still remembers how to fight like a soldier, and is more than happy to get mixed up in a brawl or gunfight if need be — sometimes, he finds, plain and simple solutions are the best. His two favorite weapons are his former service handgun, a .45 Colt M1911A semiautomatic, which has been consecrated by the touch of Azrael, the angel of death; and the Hand Of Shiva, an Uzi submachine gun blessed by the Hindu god of destruction. He can summon both guns at will (making it difficult to take them away from him), but usually carries the .45 tucked into his pants. The spells placed upon the guns make them do more damage than normal and magically reload them (so they never run out of bullets).

Caliburn knows a spell that can make his guns even more powerful. If he can obtain some blood from an enemy, he can use it to enchant a bullet specifically intended to kill that person. If used against that person, the bullet is far deadlier than normal; if used against anyone else, it’s an ordinary bullet. (Loading the bullet into one of his guns requires a Half Phase Action, or a Zero Phase Action if he makes a Fast Draw roll.)

His guns aren’t Caliburn’s only weapons. Through mystic rituals he has transformed his K-bar fighting knife into an athame, a mystical dagger used in spellcasting and able to affect spirits and ghosts. For less lethal fighting he carries a wand he forged of gunmetal that can project mystic bolts.

In his studies and travels, Robert has made more than a few enemies. Chief among these is the Cult of the Shadow Flame, from which he stole the Flame Gem. The Cult has pursued him for 30 years with horrible vengeance in mind. He’s also clashed with the evil druid Bloodstone and the assassin Deadman Walkin’ on several occasions. In Vibora Bay, his chief enemy seems to be Valerian Scarlet, but he also fights against street criminals like Mr. Gemini, the Sovereign Sons, and the Big Picture. The U.S. Army considers him “missing in action” in Vietnam.

Campaign Use: Caliburn is the Man who stands at the pivotal point in the War between Heaven and Hell. His decision — whether to support the Light, or give in to the temptations of Darkness — indicates which way the Final Battle is most likely to go. Right now he’s firmly on the side of the angels... but it might not take much to accentuate the negative sides of his personality and turn him to the demonic.

When you use him in your campaign, you

first have to somehow hint that he’s the object of the prophecy that’s wrapped around Vibora Bay — even if you don’t necessarily reveal what the prophecy’s about (since even Caliburn doesn’t know what his “destiny” concerns). If you have a mystic PC, Caliburn’s *Reputation* Perk will probably be enough to tip the PCs off; otherwise, you can let them know via NPCs like Dr. Ka. Then you have to let them interact with him and try to influence him toward the Good (even if they don’t know that’s what his destiny involves). By presenting aspects of him they’re not likely to appreciate — his cynicism and arrogance, his “vigilante mentality” when it comes to fighting crimes and occult menaces, and so forth — you can make it clear that he’s a man on the edge who can tip either way... and it would definitely be better to have such a powerful man on the side of Good (violent though he may be in comparison to many superheroes).

To make Caliburn more powerful, increase the size of his VPP. You should make him tough enough that the PCs respect him, but not so powerful that he overshadows them — that’s not his role in the campaign. To weaken him, diminish or get rid of his VPP; maybe he has to rely solely on talismans (Foci) for his mystical powers.

As a Hunter, Caliburn is tenacious and tough. He slowly but surely gathers information on his target, shadowing him as much as he can. When he feels he’s ready, he attacks as a soldier would — with every tactical advantage he can obtain. If that means shooting someone from surprise, he’ll do it; if it means luring an unwary but powerful opponent into some sort of duel, he’ll do that instead.

Appearance: Robert Caliburn appears to be in his late twenties or early thirties, with a tough, rawboned appearance that makes it clear he’s experienced many things in his time despite his young age. He usually seems to have a touch of five o’clock shadow, rarely looking either clean-shaven or bearded. His hair and facial hair are black, his eyes green. He typically wears combat boots, jeans, a t-shirt or other cheap shirt, an Army jacket, and no gloves (though he puts on fingerless gloves in cold weather or if he needs to protect his hands). He hides his weapons with his jacket — or spells of concealment. He smokes cigarettes, and almost always has one lit (he uses Fire Magic to keep it, or its smoke, from harming him or anyone nearby). He’s usually got a special deck of tarot cards he made himself in one of the jacket’s pockets.

NICOTINE THE DRAGON

Caliburn’s familiar is a dragon the size of a housecat. Named Nicotine, the mischievous little creature subsists on a diet of cheap cigars and whiskey. He has a wicked sense of humor, and often gets in trouble... but when push comes to shove, he’s one of Caliburn’s most important friends and allies.

For Nicotine, use the character sheet for the Miniature Dragon on page 30 of *Monsters, Minions, And Marauders*, but give him a few extra Skills (mainly KSs) and some Disadvantages to represent his personality.

ROBERT CALIBURN PLOT SEEDS

Caliburn does a reading with his tarot that seems to indicate a great danger is about to befall one of the PCs. Not only does he warn the PC, he insists on hanging around (at all times) to serve as a protector against “stuff you’re really not ready to handle, pal — trust me.”

The PCs find Caliburn unconscious in an alley. He’s been badly beaten and doesn’t seem to have any of his magical items with him. Nicotine’s nowhere to be found. Who did this to him, and why?

Doctor Ka appears to the PCs and indicates that Caliburn’s gone rogue — he’s fallen over the edge into the demonic. Can the Final War be long in coming now? Or is Ka mistaken... or lying?

THE FLAWS IN THERAKIEL'S PLAN

While Therakiel has carefully laid the groundwork for his plan over thousands of years, that's not to say his scheme is foolproof. Many things could go wrong... or perhaps already have.

First, the Halfway Angel believes neither God nor Satan knows of his presence or his actions. Is this true, or has he underestimated the wisdom both Foul and Divine? This thought gnaws at him constantly.

Second, while the Choice is of great help to whichever side Man chooses to support, it doesn't *guarantee* victory in the War... and Therakiel has been treating it as if it would. If Mankind Chooses the loser, all of Therakiel's plans unravel.

Third, what if, despite all of his preparations, Therakiel has not selected the right battlefield? Vibora Bay isn't the only site of mystic significance on (or beneath) the Earth, after all.

Fourth, and most important, is something that has never occurred to the Halfway Angel: what if the Final Battle really isn't all that final? Maybe the ancient prophecies about the conflict between Heaven and Hell were exaggerated. Can either truly lose, or is the War fated to be an eternal one?

THERAKIEL The Halfway Angel				
Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
40	STR	30	17-	Lift 6,400 kg; 8d6 [4]
30	DEX	60	15-	OCV: 10/DCV: 10
30	CON	40	15-	
25	BODY	30	14-	
30	INT	20	15-	PER Roll 15-
30	EGO	40	15-	ECV: 10
60	PRE	50	21-	PRE Attack: 12d6
20	COM	5	13-	
30	PD	22		Total: 30 PD (30 rPD)
30	ED	24		Total: 30 ED (30 rED)
8	SPD	40		Phases: 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12
20	REC	12		
60	END	0		
80	STUN	20		Total Characteristics Cost: 393
Movement:		Running:	6"/12"	
		Flight:	25"/50"	
Cost	Powers	END		
300	<i>Angelic Magics:</i> Variable Power Pool (Magic Pool), 120 base + 60 control cost, Cosmic (+2)	var		
107	<i>The Shadowy Sword:</i> HKA 4d6, AVLD (defense is Power Defense; +1½), Does BODY (+1), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); OIF (-½), No STR Bonus (-½), No Knockback (-¼)	0		
122	<i>Fiery Gaze:</i> Energy Blast 14d6, Line Of Sight (+½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	5		
60	<i>Fiery Shield:</i> HKA 2d6, Continuous (+1), Damage Shield (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); No STR Bonus (-½)	0		
15	<i>Halfway Angel Form:</i> Hardened (+¼) for 30 PD/30 ED	0		
37	<i>Halfway Angel Form:</i> Damage Resistance (30 PD/30 ED), Hardened (+¼)	0		
50	<i>Halfway Angel Form:</i> Life Support (Total, including Longevity: Immortality)	0		
20	<i>Halfway Angel Eyes:</i> Sight Group Flash Defense (20 points)	0		
14	<i>Halfway Angel Mind:</i> Mental Defense (20 points total)	0		
20	<i>Halfway Angel Form:</i> Power Defense (20 points)	0		
62	<i>Halfway Angel Wings:</i> Flight 25", Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	2		
32	<i>Halfway Angel Senses:</i> Spatial Awareness (no Sense Group), Increased Arc Of Perception (360 Degrees), Ranged	0		
32	<i>Halfway Angel Senses:</i> Detect Magic 15- (no Sense Group), Discriminatory, Analyze, Ranged, Sense, Targeting	0		
33	<i>Halfway Angel Form:</i> Healing BODY 2d6 (Regeneration, 2 BODY/Turn), Can Heal Limbs, Resurrection (does not work if slain by holy or infernal magics, or if his head is cut off), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½); Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼), Self Only (-½)	0		

Talents

- 22 Danger Sense (self only, out of combat, sense) 15-
20 Universal Translator 15-

Skills

- 30 *Angelic Perfection, Marred:* +3 Overall
3 AK: Elysium 15-
3 AK: Vibora Bay Region 15-
3 CK: Vibora Bay 15-
3 Navigation (Astral, Dimensional) 15-
3 Persuasion 21-
3 Seduction 21-
3 Scholar
2 1) KS: Angels And Demons 15-
2 2) KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 15-
2 3) KS: Extradimensional Beings 15-
2 4) KS: Legends And Lore 15-
2 5) KS: Vibora Bay History 15-
2 6) KS: World History 15-
2 7) KS: World Religions 15-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 1,011

Total Cost: 1,404

200+ Disadvantages

- 20 Enraged: when confronted with Christian or Satanic symbols (Uncommon), go 14-, recover 11-
25 Psychological Limitation: Utter Hatred Of God And Satan; Wants To Cast Both Of Them Down And Rule Reality In Their Place (Very Common, Total)
1,159 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 1,404

EXAMPLE POWERS FOR ANGELIC MAGICS POWER POOL

Arcane Hand: Therakiel can move... and crush... objects without touching them.

Telekinesis (60 STR). Total cost: 90 points.

Domination Of The Hosts: Therakiel can usually rely on his PRE and Interaction Skills to make mortals do what he wants (at least for a while). This power works when Presence Attacks don't.

Mind Control 16d6, Telepathic (+¼). Total cost: 100 points.

Heavenly Bridge: This power allows Therakiel to travel far in the blink of an eye.

Teleportation 40", x32 Noncombat. Total cost: 100 points.

Alternate Version: Teleportation 10", MegaScale (1" = 1 million km, can scale down to 1" = 1 km; +2). Total cost: 60 points.

Spirit Of The Higher Airs: Therakiel can make it virtually impossible for anyone to perceive him.

Invisibility to Sight, Hearing, Smell/Taste, and Mental Groups, and Combat Sense, Danger Sense, Spatial Awareness, and Detect Magic,

No Fringe, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼).
Total cost: 106 points.

Background/History: See page 102 for a discussion of Therakiel's history and activities. Today he lurks in his cave, deep, deep below the surface of Vibora Bay, waiting for his plans to come to fruition.

Personality/Motivation: Therakiel is clever, crafty, insightful, knowledgeable, has the wisdom of a higher being... and is utterly insane. His Fall and subsequent suffering unhinged his once-perfect angelic mind, making him believe that he can manipulate God, Man, and the Devil so that he becomes the true Ruler of Reality. For millennia he has orchestrated his plans with exquisite care... and now it seems that victory may at long last be within his grasp! He will let nothing and no one stop him from fulfilling his goal... and from harming both God and Satan as they harmed him, so long ago....

Quote: "Let Hell rise and Heaven fall! The clash shall be terrible, and only the Halfway Angel shall ascend above it to take into his hands the Spheres of the World and sit upon the Throne."

Powers/Tactics: Therakiel possesses considerable angelic power — though he's nowhere near as powerful as he was when he was a full angel (he flies more slowly, has fewer Overall Levels, is physically weaker and slower, and so forth). He can use his power for a wide variety of effects, such as the examples given above. When HTH Combat appeals more, he wields his sword, now wreathed more in shadow than angelic flame.

Therakiel has no sense of subtlety in combat: he attacks with all the power and ferocity he can muster. Although he has Fallen far from his former state of grace, those who fight him can see the pale shadow of what he once was — the near-atomic precision of his sword-blows, the agility of his movements, the perfect rippling of his angelic muscles. The overall effect evokes shame and pity at what he has become as much as it does fear of his remaining power.

Therakiel's COM represents his overall appearance — even with half his body ruined and quasi-demonic, he remains quite beautiful. If someone were to see only his left side, consider him to have a COM of 30; if they see only his right, it's -10.

Therakiel's Interaction Skills represent his considerable charms. Even as horrific-looking as he is, it's hard to resist the blandishments of an angel. Similarly, his PRE shows his divine majesty, which makes it easy for him to overawe weak-willed mortals.

Campaign Use: Although not your typical "master villain," the Halfway Angel is the prime mover and shaker in any Vibora Bay campaign... if only from behind the scenes. He's manipulated the very stuff of the region, the city, its energies, and its people to make it the likely battleground between Heaven and Hell, and if he has his way what's left of Vibora Bay will make ground zero at a nuclear explosion look idyllic.

Therakiel should be powerful enough to take on your entire team of PCs and pose a threat to

them. If necessary, improve his Characteristics, give him Damage Reduction, or increase the size of his VPP so he can stand toe-to-toe with them and press them hard. If he's already too strong, scale back his Characteristics, VPP, and Sword until he's at the right level; you might even get rid of the Sword entirely.

Therakiel doesn't Hunt heroes. He might manipulate events to make their lives better or worse, but if he does so it's because he believes they're an important element in his plan, not because he has a grudge against them.

No plot seed are provided for Therakiel because he is more or less a plot seed in his entirety. His backstory is the backstory of a Vibora Bay campaign.

Appearance: Therakiel is a picture of horror. His left half is that of an angel — a finely-formed human body of exquisite handsomeness, with a beautiful white-feathered wing projecting from his shoulderblade. But his right half, where he hit the Earth when he fell from Heaven, is a combination of putrefying flesh and demonic semi-transformation. In places the skin has rotted away in tiny pieces, giving a glimpse of the "dead" muscles beneath and allowing the body to ooze blood slightly (almost as if he had stigmata). There's an odd bump on his right forehead where it's apparent a demonic horn is trying to sprout. His right wing is broken and battered; it usually droops down to the floor, in contrast to the high-held feathered one, and most (but not all) of its feath-



ers have fallen off to reveal corrupt, leathery flesh vaguely reminiscent of a demon's batwings. The nails on his right hand have grown and hardened to become tiny claws, though the hand still looks human (albeit dead and battered).

Therakiel wears a tattered, soiled loincloth. He carries a finely-crafted sword around which wisps of shadow sometimes flicker.

DUALITY AS A CAMPAIGN THEME

The dual nature of Therakiel — half angel, half demon — is mirrored again and again throughout Vibora Bay and its people. For example:

- the city itself is divided in half by High Street, creating Easton (a “good” neighborhood, inhabited mainly by whites, many of them wealthy) and Weston (a “bad” neighborhood, home to far more minorities and poor people)
- Robert Caliburn, the main NPC the PCs are likely to encounter, is half a man of mysticism, half a man of military action — he bestrides those two worlds, not quite able to decide between them.
- many of the city's other superhuman or noteworthy residents manifest the theme of duality in some way. Some of them come in pairs (like Sister Rain and Brother Thunder), while others can split themselves into two (Dr. Ka, Mr. Gemini). Some, such as Guy Sweetland, maintain two faces to the world.
- the Police Department has two leaders, a Commissioner and a Chief. One is a black woman and a reformer, the other a white man and a traditionalist.

If you want to use the Vibora Bay backstory in your own campaign, try to work this element of *duality* into your game. The easiest way to do this is to play off of the “dual identity” concept that applies in most superhero settings. Most heroes have two identities — one costumed, one mundane — and this dual nature both enables their crimefighting and makes their lives more difficult. By emphasizing aspects of this duality, you can subtly riff on the setting's theme. Other possibilities include encouraging and creating connections between PCs (perhaps two of them are brother and sister, leader and sidekick, or symbiotically linked somehow), planning scenarios and crimes that take place in pairs or involve concepts defined by dualities, or arranging your “rogues' gallery” so that each PC has a polar opposite.

VIBORA BAY CAMPAIGNS

First and foremost, *Vibora Bay* is intended for *Champions* campaigns, particularly “Mystic World” games that emphasize heroes with magical powers. It's best suited to Low-Powered or Standard Superheroes, since the “feel” of the setting and backstory suffers if the game becomes too over-the-top. But powerful super-mages aren't unknown in the comics, and if that's the way you want to run your game, scaling the villains up to

match shouldn't be too difficult (see individual villain descriptions for suggestions).

If a *Champions* game isn't quite what you have in mind, don't worry — Vibora Bay is a good place to run many other types of campaigns.

DARK CHAMPIONS

A *Dark Champions* campaign set in Vibora Bay typically emphasizes weird conspiracies, monster hunting, and/or paranormal phenomena more than crimefighting, spying, or the like. The PCs are occult detectives, psychic investigators, minor mystics, monster slayers, and similar character types. They use charms, potions, and warding-spells as much as they do guns and nightvision gear — in fact, they might not even need guns at all.

Example: *Jason decides to run a “monster hunters” campaign set in Vibora Bay, but he doesn't want modern technology ruining the “creepy” feel he plans to create. He decides he'll run a sort of Dark Champions/Ninja Hero crossover campaign in which the PCs, called “Werewolf Stalkers,” use martial arts and silver swords to fight their furry foes. He's willing to consider PCs who are low-powered spellcasters or psychics instead of trained warriors, but at least for the time being he doesn't want any Special Forces types, ex-cops, or the like.*

FANTASY HERO

The emphasis on the mystical makes Vibora Bay a good source of ideas for a Fantasy campaign. A GM who wants to run a traditional Fantasy game can borrow the Vibora Bay backstory and characters, then tailor them to suit his campaign. Instead of Therakiel, he substitutes a fallen god eager for revenge on his former pantheon brethren; in place of Dr. Ka, he has an order of plane-walking wizards; he turns Robert Caliburn into an oddly-powered, scruffy-looking half-orc paladin. Then let the prophecy, and Caliburn's destiny, play out.

Vibora Bay also serves as a superb setting for an Urban Fantasy game. As it stands, the magic of the city may be a little too powerful, flashy, and overplayed for most Urban Fantasy games, so damp down on it a little. In this sort of game, most of the “mystics” in the city are just sensitives who are aware of the Mystic World; very few of them can actually cast spells, and those spells are heavily Limited (Concentration, Extra Time, Immobile Focus, and the like). The villains get replaced with malign Unseelie faeries, shadow-haunting ghosts and monsters, and other, more subtle, adversaries — and the collective mind of the San Sebastien Swamp becomes an even more important element of the setting.

PULP HERO

Vibora Bay was around in the 1920s and '30s and every bit as mystical (allowing for the fact that the ambient level of magic in the world was much lower then). Occult investigators can look into the mysteries lurking in the shadows of the city... and once they flush something malevolent, the two-fisted heroes can move in and finish it off. Such a

campaign may focus as much on mundane murder mysteries as mystic weirdness; a constant diet of vampires, werewolves, cultists, and Elder Horrors From Beyond gets old after a while. See page 12 for a discussion of what was going on in Vibora Bay in the Twenties and Thirties.

STAR HERO

To use Vibora Bay in a Science Fiction setting,

consider converting it from an ordinary city to an enormous space station, orbital base, or similar facility located off-planet. The station occupies a strange nexus of “galactic ley lines” or some other site that has both mystic and cosmic significance, which attracts all sorts of strange visitors... who in turn give rise to adventures. The facility itself could be haunted, secretly the abode of an Elder Horror or immortal wizard, or perhaps even sentient!

THE GM'S VAULT



This section contains additional and/or secret information about Vibora Bay that's for the GM's eyes alone. *If you're playing in, or plan to play in, a campaign based on the Vibora Bay setting, do not read this section!!*

The GM's Vault is organized by chapter and page number. If the Vault doesn't comment on some part of the main text, it's usually safe to take what's written there as accurate (or as left for each GM's individual interpretation). As always, you're free to change anything in this book to suit your own preferences or campaign.

CHAPTER ONE

PAGE 8 — THE EARLIEST SETTLERS

The swamp collective mind (see below) remembers the arrival of the earliest humans in Florida, although its own personality was primitive at the time and it can't quite pinpoint the exact date (though twelve to fifteen thousand years ago “sounds right”). As to why exactly the area was never settled by Native Americans, you're free to leave it a mystery, attribute it to the efforts of the San Sebastien Swamp collective mind, or add your own fiendish designs. The explanation might be as simple as the large number of venomous serpents in the area.

PAGE 13 — MAX PENDRAGON

Max knew the truth about the San Sebastien Swamp (see below), though it's unclear whether the collective mind ever actually helped him in his crimefighting efforts. You might decide there are other mystical do-gooders out there who benefit from occasionally “communing” with the collective mind, which is an excellent excuse to bring interesting guest stars to town.

CHAPTER TWO

The most important aspect of Viboran geography is the large swamp north of the city.

The San Sebastien Swamp And The Skunk Ape

Just north of the Vibora Bay city limits stands the San Sebastien Swamp, a federally protected wetland fed by several small estuaries of the Choctawhatchee River (which itself feeds into the Choctawhatchee Bay about 20 miles west of the city). The San Sebastien Swamp Protection Agency, a state agency empowered and funded by the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and headquartered in Vibora Bay, manages the swamp, which falls under the Coastal Wetlands Protection Act.

About two to four miles wide and ten miles long, San Sebastien Swamp is home to a vast array of plants and animals, some of whom, like the Florida panther, the American alligator, the wood stork, and the southern bald eagle are officially listed as endangered. Within its limits biologists have also found black bears, herons, ibises, and of course a wide variety of snakes, frogs, and turtles. The most common trees include cypresses, sweetgums, oaks, and red maples. The undergrowth is thick with ferns, wildflowers, and epiphytes, and rare wild orchids can be found on higher land.

Most of the swamp is under water, typically only a meter (.5", or about three feet) deep or less, but in some locations as deep as 4-5 meters (about 2", or 12-15 feet). Small underwater caves dot the shorelines of the various streams that feed the swamp, and are usually home to snails and crayfish, which in turn draw wading birds. The tides in the Gulf of Mexico affect the swamp slightly through its connection to the Choctawhatchee Bay, and at different times of day the water level rises and falls by several inches.

The Collective Mind

Unbeknownst to almost all of the inhabitants of Vibora Bay, the entire San Sebastien Swamp is vaguely intelligent — a collective mind connected by mystical means to every single living creature within the bounds of the swamp, yet somehow separate from them as well. The intelligence can manifest itself anywhere within the swamp it

THE SWAMP AS NPC

The San Sebastien Swamp makes an interesting potential ally for Viboran PCs. It's a font of useful knowledge, especially if the PCs handle it correctly, but it's got its own ideas about what's important and may require some patient negotiation. It won't involve itself in mundane affairs — heroes will be hard-pressed to even explain the nature of a bank robbery to the collective, let alone why it should care or help them capture the bad guys involved.

chooses, and when necessary “take control” of living creatures within it. This allows it to see and communicate through animals, insects, or even plants (though when it chooses to actually speak with a non-mystic it uses a creature with some sort of vocal apparatus). It can also animate non-motile matter, like plants or mud. For example, it can wrap a threatening intruder in vines or cause “quicksand” to form beneath the feet of people who try to harm it. (In game terms, treat this as an Entangle with 3-5 dice of effect and corresponding DEF.) The animals that make up part of the collective are in all other ways normal examples of their respective species; use the write-ups in *The HERO System Bestiary* for them if necessary.

If the swamp wants to interact with the world outside its boundaries, it creates a humanoid creature known to locals as the Skunk Ape. The “Ape” is a mobile humanoid mass composed of plant matter. Most Viborans regard it as a mythical creature (see below). It may also send out individual creatures from its own population when the Skunk Ape manifestation would attract too much attention or be too slow to be useful. It usually uses ordinary birds or fish for this purpose.

The swamp itself doesn't know exactly how it became sentient, and honestly doesn't much care — it considers itself the “guardian” not only of its own territory and member creatures, but also of the city itself, which it referred to as its “baby sister” in one cryptic conversation with Dr. Ka. Its memories date back to before the arrival of humans, and it's sure it actually must be quite older than that, though its earliest recollections are vague (to put it mildly).

Characters can communicate with the collective mind directly. Though mystical knowledge or abilities makes communicating easier, the swamp occasionally converses with outsiders through either the Skunk Ape or other animals directly, especially if there's an arcane crisis brewing (or if something, like commercial development, is harming it or threatening its existence). It has a definite personality — while most observers and mystics place it firmly on the side of “good,” it has little interest in the day-to-day lives of short-lived humans, preferring to concentrate on long-term concerns and the activities of the great mystical powers, of which it seems to know a fair amount. When dealing with humans who show the proper respect for its age, power, and the environment in general, it's helpful and even friendly to a point... but when something arouses its anger, it shows no more compassion than a hurricane.

Among the human inhabitants of Vibora Bay, Dr. Ka and Sister Rain are both familiar with the swamp's nature, and Black Mask has spoken with it once during a case she worked with Ka (though she isn't clear on the exact details, she understands the swamp houses a powerful mystical being). The local director of the San Sebastien Swamp Protection Agency, a Florida State Wildlife Agency official named Megan Findley, has made it her particular mission to protect the swamp from the predations of developers and poachers. In exchange, she's “communed” with the collec-

tive mind on several occasions, an experience she describes as “intensely religious.”

What not even the swamp knows is that its sentience did not arise naturally — it's all part of Therakiel's grand scheme. Knowing he needed to create a mystic battleground for the forces of Heaven and Hell to fight their final battle on, he gifted the swamp with “intelligence.” He knew that would enhance the arcane qualities of the region, which would attract mystics whose presence and activities would make the area a site of even greater mystic significance — which would in turn draw the grand forces he's been manipulating the way a lodestone attracts iron flakes.

THE SKUNK APE

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
40	STR	30	17-	Lift 6,400 kg; 8d6 [4]
14	DEX	12	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
28	CON	36	15-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
11	EGO	2	11-	ECV: 4
30	PRE	20	15-	PRE Attack: 6d6
4	COM	-3	10-	
24	PD	16		Total: 24 PD (10 rPD)
20	ED	14		Total: 20 ED (10 rED)
3	SPD	6		Phases: 4, 8, 12
14	REC	0		
56	END	0		
54	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 153

Movement: Running: 6"/12"
Leaping: 8"/16"
Swimming: 5"/10"

Cost	Powers	END
5	Plant Body Manipulation: Elemental Control, 10-point powers	
2	1) Root Growth: Knockback Resistance -5"; Costs Endurance (only to activate; -¼), Only Works In Earth/Soil (-1)	1
22	2) Thorny Growth: HKA 1d6, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Damage Shield (affects targets Skunk Ape attacks in HTH Combat; +¾), Continuous (+1); Extra Time (Full Phase to activate; -¼), No Knockback (-¼), No STR Bonus (-½)	0
8	3) Longer Limbs: Stretching 3"; No Non-combat Stretching (-¼)	1
14	4) Body Of Vegetation: Desolidification (affected by any type of attack); Cannot Pass Through Solid Objects (-½), Does Not Protect Against Damage (-1)	4
42	Awful Stench: Change Environment 2" radius (stench), -4 to CON Rolls (see text), -6 to Smell/Taste Group PER Rolls, Multiple Combat Effects, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½); Always On (-½), No Range (-½)	0
28	Awful Stench: Add to Change Environment -2 CV, -2 to DEX-based Rolls, -2 to INT-based Rolls, and -2 to PRE-based Rolls, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½); Always	

- On (-½), No Range (-½) Only Applies If Victim Fails CON Roll (see text; -½) 0
- 79 *Noxious Gases*: Change Environment 1" radius, -5 to target's Smell/Taste Group PER Rolls, 6 Charges lasting 1 Week each (removed by washing in tomato juice; +1), Usable As Attack (+1), Ranged (+½); Limited Range (2"; -¼), Linked (-½) **plus** Smell/Taste Group Images, +5 to PER Rolls, 1" radius, 6 Charges lasting 1 Week each (removed by washing in tomato juice; +1), Usable As Attack (+1), Ranged (+½); Limited Range (2"; -¼), Linked (-½), Set Effect (make victim stink; -1) **plus** Energy Blast 4d6, NND (defense is Life Support [Self-Contained Breathing]; +1); 6 Charges (-¾), Limited Range (2"; -¼), Linked (-½) [6]
- 20 *Speak With Plants*: Telepathy 4d6 (Plant class of minds) 2
- 10 *Tough Body*: Damage Resistance (10 PD/10 ED) 0
- 30 *Not Entirely Solid*: Physical Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50% 0
- 10 *Wards Of The Collective*: Mental Defense (12 points total) 0
- 43 *Mystical Metabolism*: Life Support (Total, except for Safe Environment: Intense Cold) 0
- 18 *Regrowth*: Healing BODY 2d6 (Regeneration; 2 BODY per Turn), Can Heal Limbs, Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½); Extra Time (1 Turn; -1¼), Self Only (-½) 0
- 3 *Fast Swimmer*: Swimming +3" (5" total) 1
- 6 *Enhanced Smell*: +3 PER with Smell/Taste Group 0
- 10 *Tracking By Scent*: Tracking for Smell/Taste Group 0
- 5 *Dark-Adapted Eyes*: Nightvision 0
- 10 *Part Of The Collective*: Mind Link with the Swamp Collective, Psychic Bond 0

Talents

- 3 Environmental Movement: Thicketmaster (no penalties on Undergrowth or similar natural environments)

Skills

- 10 +2 with HTH Combat
- 3 Climbing 12-
- 3 Concealment 11-
- 6 AK: The San Sebastien Swamp 15-
- 5 Shadowing 12-
- 3 Stealth 12-
- 3 Tracking 11-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 401

Total Cost: 554

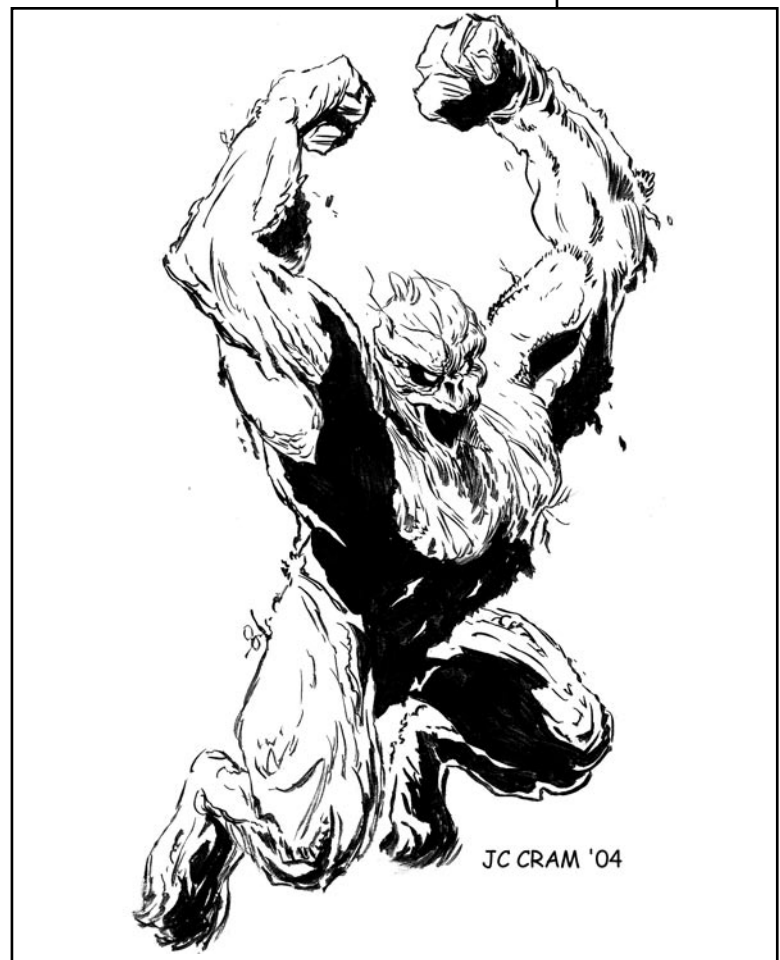
200+ Disadvantages

- 5 Dependence: must contact the San Sebastien Swamp at least once per day or take 3d6 damage (Very Common)
- 25 Distinctive Features: Enormous, Smelly

- Swamp-Creature (Not Concealable; Causes Extreme Reaction [abject fear])
- 15 Hunted: Enemies of the Collective 8- (Mo Pow, Capture/Kill)
- 5 Hunted: assorted cryptozoologists and the like 8- (Less Pow, Mildly Punish)
- 5 Physical Limitation: Inconvenient Size (7'5", weighs 200 kg) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
- 25 Psychological Limitation: Part Of The Collective And Devoted To Its Ideals (Very Common, Total)
- 10 Reputation: horrifying creature of the swamp, 11-
- 15 Susceptibility: to pesticides and herbicides, takes 3d6 damage instantly (Uncommon)
- 20 Susceptibility: to temperatures below freezing, takes Drain DEX 3d6 per Turn (Uncommon)
- 5 Vulnerability: 1½ x STUN from Cold attacks (Uncommon)
- 224 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 554

Background/History: The "Skunk Ape" is actually the physical manifestation of the collective hive-mind of the San Sebastien Swamp. When the collective needs to observe or manipulate events outside its own physical boundaries (or occasionally within them), it creates a vaguely man-shaped creature out of its own materials (mostly plant matter, but some



SAN SEBASTIEN SWAMP PLOT SEEDS

Coming Soon At This Site:

Megan Findley contacts the PCs secretly. It seems ACI has bought off some state government officials and gotten permits to build a shopping mall in the center of the San Sebastien Swamp. All of her legal efforts to thwart the project have failed — can the heroes help, either by convincing ACI to change its plans or exposing the buyoff? What if some ACI developers know exactly what they're doing, and have nefarious plans for a department store on such potent property?

In A World They Never

Made: In the depths of the swamp is a dimensional portal leading to various alternate earths, including ones where humanity never emerged as the planet's dominant species. A multiverse-threatening crisis is afoot, which has led a team of anthropomorphic animal superheroes to our dimension in search of their arch-foe....

Red In Tooth And Claw: A madness has overtaken the collective mind of the swamp, turning it against humanity. The city comes under attack by an army of snakes, alligators, panthers, and other dangerous creatures, all operating with a fiendish intelligence. Can the PCs restore the swamp's good nature before tragedy strikes?

mud, rocks, and occasionally even animals become part of the body). It's possible for the Swamp to create more than one Skunk Ape at a time, but rarely does so since that requires an enormous amount of mystical energy.

The Skunk Ape also serves as a protector and guardian of the Swamp, both against mystical intruders who know the nature of what they're fighting and ignorant human despoilers. Since Megan Findley took over the SSSPA (above), this has been a less frequent problem, but from World War II until the 1970s Skunk Apes were used to harass and destroy various construction efforts within the San Sebastien Swamp's boundaries, which led of course to the extensive local legends about the swamp being haunted. To this day stories of the Skunk Ape bring small hordes of cryptozoologists and other crackpots to Vibora Bay in search of proof of the creature's existence. The Swamp is careful not to allow them to get hold of any actual evidence.

Personality/Motivation: The Skunk Ape has the same personality and motivations as the Swamp's hive-mind itself, as described above. The Skunk Ape is sentient and can make decisions on its own when separated from the collective, but its viewpoints and personality remain limited to those given to it when it's created. In other words, while it's a separate being, it still agrees with and supports the collective's goals and opinions entirely.

Quote: "You endanger us with your foul magics. Stop this now, or we will stop you."

Powers/Tactics: The Skunk Ape's powers primarily come from its unique physical composition. As a being made from plants and muck, it's extraordinarily resistant to physical damage and can reshape its body as necessary, extending limbs or passing through small spaces as well as rapidly healing any damage it sustains. It's unaffected by hunger, disease, and most environmental effects, and has no need to breathe. It can extend roots down into soil to make itself more difficult to move.

The "skunk" part of the Skunk Ape's name comes from the fact that it stinks to high heaven. Anyone who comes within 2" of the Skunk Ape must make a CON Roll at -4. If he fails, he suffers a -2 penalty to CV and all Skill Rolls because of gagging and retching. An affected victim may make another roll each Phase; the -2 penalty remains in effect until he succeeds. The GM may lower the CON Roll penalty over time (-3 the second roll, -2 on the fourth roll, -1 on the eighth and all succeeding rolls) to reflect how a character becomes used to the odor. The smell also makes it difficult for characters to perceive other smells (on the other hand, it also reduces the Skunk Ape's ability to use Stealth — heroes can smell it coming).

The Skunk Ape can emit bursts of noxious gas from its body, similar to the way a skunk sprays animals that bother it. The gas sickens and weakens those attacked with it... and the stench lasts about a week, unless the victim washes in tomato juice, vinegar, or the like.

The Skunk Ape is in constant mental com-

munication with the Swamp's collective hive-mind, and can coordinate any activities with it (and the animals it's in contact with) precisely. The Swamp has little knowledge of formal tactics in combat, though it's a quick learner if it faces an opponent using intelligent strategies.

Appearance: The Skunk Ape usually stands a little over seven feet tall and weighs about two hundred kilograms. It's made of plant matter (primarily roots, leaves, and vines) as well as some mud and earth, a fair amount of water, and even the odd animal (insects and worms move through its form, and once when it was struck particularly hard a newt popped out of the "wound"). Its features are vague and seem to be sculpted from branches and leaves, and its skin is covered with a fine moss that from a distance resembles short, dark green or brown "hair" (hence the "Ape" appellation, since it could easily be confused for a large, furry primate).

PAGE 26 — THE TANGLES

It's up to you whether there's anything magical about the streets in the Tangles. Though the confusing layout might be the result of poor city planning or perversity on the part of the city's founding fathers, you may find it more interesting if the streets themselves do occasionally change their locations or multiply their number. This allows for the traditional and beloved plot device of the "mysterious shop in an alley that can't be found again." Perhaps this area of the city is sentient as well, and manifests different streets and buildings on a whim or according to some arcane design. Or, portions of the neighborhood may in fact exist only in other dimensions, occasionally accessible through mystical portals disguised as storefronts and dead-end alleyways.

PAGE 29 — MAYOR BARKER

Barker privately believes very strongly in the existence of magic and the supernatural, having seen mystical superhumans operate in her city several times, as well as once seeing what she's pretty sure was a werewolf while working on a story for WGHJ. She won't support any policies or laws restricting the rights or activities of otherwise law-abiding superhumans, whether magical in nature or not.

PAGE 30 — VINCENT MIDKIFF

Though Midkiff isn't exactly a criminal, he is an opportunist, and he thinks bringing extensive development to the wilderness areas north of the city is inevitable. Therefore, he reasons, why not start the process now, and then take advantage of it with some high-priced consulting jobs once he's stepped down from public office? He'll continue to push for opening up the land to development, and finds the interference of people like Megan Findley (see page 112) a personal annoyance.

PAGE 30 — LETICIA HOWARD

The City Attorney is in the pocket of Robinson and the Big Picture, and as part of Robinson's negotiated truce with Sweetland also refrains from investigating his organization's crimes with any

particular fervor. Robinson has actually gotten quite good at setting up “reform” candidates to take advantage of the public’s general distaste for the city’s ineffectual prosecutors, with each one getting thrown out and replaced by the next pre-selected “reformer.” Perhaps a PC can help an *actual* reformer get elected... but that reformer would need to be very brave and very careful.

PAGE 30 — PAUL SABO

Though he won’t admit it publicly, Sabo is a firm believer in the supernatural. He’s been known to turn to “unofficial sources” outside the government (including superheroes) to help him evaluate some of the stranger deaths assigned to his department.

CHAPTER THREE

PAGE 35 — THE VIBORA BAY BANNER

Here are some plot seeds for using the *Banner* and its reporters in your campaign:

Vanished: Star reporter Walt Becker has disappeared while working on a story about the history of an upscale building in Easton. Norman Cooper asks the PCs to investigate, but when they go through the reporter’s notes they find he was researching a series of unsolved murders from the 1890s. The police suspect foul play, but who would kill to protect a secret that’s over a century old?

Ablaze: Somewhere along the line the *Banner* has made a vicious enemy. Over the last few weeks a series of acts of arson by the pyromaniac villain Blowtorch have destroyed several trucks, four news kiosks, and the home of the paper’s assistant editor. It’s only a matter of time before he strikes at the paper’s main office. Can the PCs stop him, then discover the identity and motive of his employer?

PAGE 39 — THE MINEFIELD

Dante Bancroft doesn’t own the Minefield — he’s just one of the puppets of the woman who does, Valerian Scarlet. Scarlet, who prefers to keep a low profile in Vibora Bay, lives and maintains offices on the *upper* floor of the Minefield, above the “secret” and oh-so-trendy basement. From there, she casts spells nightly that subtly drain the vitality of revelers below, as part of a vile bargain she made with a demon decades ago.

Bancroft himself has no mystic powers, despite the rumors about him. He is, however, a gifted sleight of hand artist and “con man” who’s not above implying that he possesses occult talents... particularly if that would impress a woman he’s trying to seduce.

Ram is actually not a human — he’s the result of one of Dr. Phillippe Moreau’s notorious experiments in creating animal-human hybrids. Ram, like his more famous compatriots Dr. Silverback and Snake, was created in a laboratory hidden deep in the Ukraine. When the New Knights of the Round Table captured Moreau, Ram chose to accompany them back to England rather than live in the hidden village they dubbed Beast Mountain.

(See *Champions Universe*, page 130). He’s traveled across the world since then, looking for a place to fit in, and settled in Vibora Bay in 2000. He’s vaguely aware that Scarlet isn’t a nice person, but prefers not to ask any questions; he likes his job and doesn’t suspect the true depths of evil she’s capable of. He might defend her if heroes uncovered her activities, if doing so didn’t particularly endanger him. On the other hand, if he discovered she’s also been draining his own vitality, or that of someone he’d come to care about, he might overcome his reticence and redeem himself.

VALERIAN SCARLET

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
35	STR	25	16-	Lift 3,200 kg; 7d6 [3]
26	DEX	48	14-	OCV: 9/DCV: 9
25	CON	30	14-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
18	INT	8	13-	PER Roll 13-
23	EGO	26	14-	ECV: 8
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
24	COM	7	14-	
15	PD	8		Total: 15 PD (15 rPD)
15	ED	10		Total: 15 ED (15 rED)
6	SPD	24		Phases: 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12
12	REC	0		
50	END	0		
46	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 211

Movement: Running: 6”/12”
Flight: 8”/16”

Cost	Powers	END
160	<i>Demonic Spells:</i> Variable Power Pool (Magic Pool), 80 base + 40 control cost, Powers Can Be Changed As A Zero-Phase Action (+1)	var
80	<i>Life Force Vampirism:</i> Multipower, 80-point reserve	
8u	1) <i>Individual “Bleeding”:</i> Drain BODY and STUN 4d6, two Characteristics simultaneously (+½), Ranged (+½)	8
1u	2) <i>Dancing Their Lives Away:</i> Drain BODY and STUN 1d6, two Characteristics simultaneously (+½), Area Of Effect (80” Radius; +2), Delayed Return Rate (points return at the rate of 5 per Month; +2), Indirect (+¼), Invisible Power Effects (Fully Invisible; +1), Ranged (+½); Concentration (½ DCV throughout activation; -½), Extra Time (1 Hour; -3), Gestures (throughout activation; -½), Incantations (throughout activation; -½)	7
30	<i>Rending Nails:</i> HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR), Armor Piercing (+½), Penetrating (+½)	3
15	<i>Infernally Tough:</i> Damage Resistance (15 PD/15 ED)	0
37	<i>Infernal Protections:</i> Life Support (Immunity: all terrestrial diseases, biowarfare agents, poisons, and chemical warfare agents; Longevity: Immortality; Safe Environments: Intense Heat; Self-Contained Breathing)	0

- 27 *Form of Mist*: Desolidification (affected by wind or magic); Cannot Pass Through Solid Objects (-½) 4
- 11 *Misty Flight*: Flight 8"; Linked (to Form Of Mist; -½) 2

Perks

- 10 Money: Wealthy
- 12 Contacts: 12 points' worth among the evil parts of the Mystic World

Skills

- 3 Acting 14-
- 3 Bureaucratics 14-
- 3 Concealment 13-
- 3 High Society 14-
- 1 KS: The Descending Hierarchy 8-
- 3 KS: Demon-Summoning Rituals 13-
- 2 Language: French (fluent conversation)
- 19 Power: Magic 21-
- 3 PS: Nightclub Management 13-
- 3 Seduction 14-
- 3 Stealth 14-
- 3 Streetwise 14-
- 3 Trading 14-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 443

Total Cost: 654

200+ Disadvantages

- 10 Enraged: when cheated (Uncommon), go 11-, recover 14-
- 5 Hunted: Kerathios 8- (Mo Pow, Watching)
- 20 Physical Limitation: Must continue to send

life force to Kerathios or lose powers (Frequently, Fully Impairing)

- 20 Psychological Limitation: Powerhungry (Common, Total)
- 25 Psychological Limitation: Utterly Without Compassion (Very Common, Total)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Cautious, Prefers To Remain Behind The Scenes (Common, Strong)
- 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Valerie Hartwig) (Frequently Major)
- 344 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 654

EXAMPLE POWERS FOR DEMONIC SPELLS POWER POOL

In addition to the specific examples listed here, you could adapt a lot of the Thaumaturgy spells from Chapter Three of *The Mystic World* by changing their special effects.

The Brimstone Path: This spell carries Valerian great distances without her having to physically cross the intervening space. When she departs, there's a thunderclap and a cloud of foul-smelling brimstone manifests.

Teleportation 20" (total cost: 40 points) **plus** *Sight, Hearing, and Smell/Taste Group Flash 4d6* (30 Active Points); *Linked* (-½) (total cost: 20 points). **Total cost: 60 points.**

Demonfire Aura: Valerian can wreath herself in Hellfire both as a form of protection and as a way to harm those who would touch her.

Force Field (10 PD/10 ED/10 Power Defense), *Reduced Endurance* (½ END; +¼) (total cost: 37 points) **plus** *HKA 1d6, Continuous* (+1), *Damage Shield* (+½) (37 Active Points); *Linked* (-¼), *No STR Bonus* (-½) (total cost: 21 points). **Total cost: 58 points.**

Flamesight: After lighting a fire in her small bronze brazier, Valerian can stare into the flames and view distant locations without having to actually be there. She often uses this spell to spy upon the partygoers at her club.

Clairsentience (Sight and Hearing Groups), 8x Range (1,400", or 1.75 miles), *Mobile Perception Point* (50 Active Points); *OAF Bulky* (brazier; -1½), *Concentration* (½ DCV throughout use; -½), *Extra Time* (1 Turn to activate; -¾). **Total cost: 13 points.**

Hellfire Blast: Valerian can strike her enemies with a bolt of pure Hellfire.

Basic Hellfire Blast: Energy Blast 12d6. **Total cost: 60 points.**

Alternate Blasts I: Energy Blast 10d6, with +½ worth of Advantages. **Total cost: 75 points.**

Alternate Blasts II: Energy Blast 8d6, with +1 worth of Advantages. **Total cost: 80 points.**



Background/History: Valerie Hartwig was a typical high school student in Panama City in 1986 — bored out of her mind. She was smart, but school was torture for her; kids her age were such children! Whenever possible she snuck out of the house and hitched rides to Vibora Bay, where she partied all night in one of the local goth or dance clubs that wasn't too careful about checking her fake ID.

It wasn't long before some of the folks she met at one of those clubs began showing her other interesting ways to pass the time... like studying the occult. Valerie turned out to be a natural at magic, and one evening she and a male friend succeeded in summoning a demon in his apartment. The demon's name was Kerathios, and he was surprised and unhappy to have been brought to Earth by such rank amateurs, who couldn't even draw a protective circle correctly! Kerathios mused on how far standards had fallen among human mages as he munched on the boy's leg. When he turned to the girl, however, he was surprised to sense a certain... spark within her. Why, the little child wasn't even afraid of him! Kerathios was amused, and when the girl said she wanted to make a deal with him, he folded his tail under himself politely and sat down to listen.

As it turned out, what Valerie wanted was pretty prosaic — eternal youth and beauty, and mystical power. What made her interesting was what she was willing to do to get these things. Kerathios made her a bargain: he'd provide her with immortality and superhuman powers, but only if she'd use her spells to provide him with life forces, the living vitality of human souls. A few people a night was all he wanted. Valerie considered the prospect. She had no particular qualms about killing — other people were stupid and boring, after all. But killing two or three people every night... even in Vibora Bay that was bound to be difficult to cover up. She had no desire to spend her immortality on the run from police and superheroes.

She made a counteroffer (the simple boldness of the act making Kerathios laugh yet again). Instead of the entire life force of two or three people every night, what if she gave him a small fraction of the life forces of crowds of people instead? Kerathios agreed to the deal.

Within a few weeks, a new nightclub had opened in Vibora Bay. Though the putative owner was a scenester named Dante Bancroft (an ex-lover of Valerie's, now desperately trying to get back into her good graces), the word among those in the know was that it was really owned by a mysterious sorceress named Valerian Scarlet. Few cared, though — they were happy to keep partying until dawn and exhaustion forced them to go home. And if a few partiers felt a little ill after dancing all night at the Minefield, well, they should probably just take better care of themselves, right?

Personality/Motivation: Valerian Scarlet is stone cold. She has no emotional connection to any of the people around her — they're only tools or obstacles. As far as she's concerned, demons and other extra-

planar beings are the only “real” forms of life, and she intends to stick around long enough and learn enough magic to join them someday. She doesn't really have a firm idea of how she's going to do this, but she figures now that she's immortal, she's got time to learn. Therefore, she's thrown herself into her studies of black magic and spends some of each night performing the rituals necessary to drain just a little of the life out of each reveler at her club.

Valerian Scarlet's likely to get involved in any situation she hears of that involves powerful artifacts or the opportunity to grab mystical power. She's not really a big player in the Mystic World yet (though she's clashed with Robert Caliburn a time or two)... but considering her youth and inexperience, she's already somebody to watch out for.

Quote: “Oh, you costumed do-gooders are so *dull!* Why hasn't someone killed you yet?”

Powers/Tactics: Valerian is a moderately-talented mage who can already call upon a wide range of magical abilities. In addition to her Demonic Spells VPP, her specialties include spells that drain the life force from others, either subtly from a group or more forcefully from an individual (note that the group power has Invisible Power Effects, while the direct attack does not). She's also fond of turning herself into a white cloud of mist, like some vampires are known to do. In this form she travels around the city, picking up bits of information. Finally, her pact with Kerathios has made her physically superhuman, with remarkable strength, fingernails as sharp as knives, and immunity to the effects of aging, diseases, and poisons.

Despite her prowess, Valerian is not a fighter at heart. She'll attack those who disturb or annoy her, but if she can't vanquish them with a Hellfire Blast or two, she'll rabbit. She can always find another way to keep her pact with Kerathios, but she loathes the thought of being captured or confined.

Campaign Use: Valerian is a subtle villain for use in your games. Although she's powerful, she's not the smash-open-the-bank-and-steal-the-cash variety of supervillain — she works from behind the scenes, manipulating others to do her work.

Completely unbeknownst to her, Valerian is a crucial part of Therakiel's plan (see page 102) — in fact, he arranged things so her “summoning” would succeed and Kerathios would grant her magic. As a woman with demonic powers, she's the polar opposite of Robert Caliburn (a man who often uses angelic powers), making her an important element in his scheme. His machinations often set the two at odds, though what he ultimately intends for her remains a mystery.

If you want to make Valerian Scarlet more powerful, you can increase the size of her VPP, or make it fully Cosmic. However, since she's not intended as a combatant, that's probably not necessary. To weaken her, decrease her Power Pool and/or some of her Characteristics.

Valerian rarely works up the interest to Hunt someone, but if sufficiently motivated by a desire for revenge, or to inflict some petty cruelty for her

VALERIAN SCARLET PLOT SEEDS

Valerian Scarlet decides it's time to get rid of the nuisance of Robert Caliburn... but she certainly doesn't want to endanger herself to do it! She begins manipulating the PCs, and if necessary the media, to turn them against Caliburn so they'll “remove” him for her.

A rival club called the Jetstream has opened up in Vibora Bay, and all of a sudden Valerian finds that her club isn't nearly as crowded as it used to be. This could be a problem, not only when it comes to keeping Kerathios “fed,” but in terms of profit! What's going on with this new club that it could attract so much business so quickly — and how can she solve the problem without revealing her involvement with the Minefield? Maybe those meddling heroes can help...

Kerathios decides he wants more life force. How can Valerian get it... and how will the heroes respond to the sudden rash of “illnesses” and “unexpected deaths”?

own amusement, she can make someone's life a living Hell. She'll start subtly, perhaps with a curse that inflicts Unluck, but gradually work her way up to attacks by summoned demons and the like.

Appearance: Valerian Scarlet is a sexy, thin white woman who appears to be in her late teens, with black hair kept fashionably short and blue eyes. She's usually dressed in black, goth/punk club clothes.

PAGE 40 — BLACK MASK

Here are three plot seeds for the Black Mask:

The Black Mask contacts the PCs. She claims she's being haunted by the ghosts of her deceased predecessors, who are accusing her of failing to live up to their legacy or do enough to fight crime. She wants the heroes' help to drive the ghosts away. Is she going insane, or is this a devious attack by some enemy?

The Black Mask seems to be developing a romantic fixation on a male PC with whom she worked on a case... one case. It's starting to verge into stalking. Is this a legitimate (albeit unhealthy) interest, or is something more going on?

A criminal has copied the Black Mask's costume and weapons and is making it look like she's turned supervillain. She's having no luck tracking this person down, so she asks the PCs to help her clear her name.

PAGE 43 — THE ARENA

The Arena does in fact have an outpost in Vibora Bay, in an abandoned factory in Catalina.

The local version isn't much like the Arena elsewhere. It's a private operation run by two "entrepreneurs" named David Epps and Randy D'Ambrosio — local organized crime hasn't taken over (though Epps and D'Ambrosio pay the Big Picture for protection, and Clark Robinson sometimes attends a fight). The Viboran Arena includes non-superhuman fighters, though they'd better be very good. Practitioners of various martial arts, including Vibora Carmesi, sometimes demonstrate their skills in no-holds-barred non-superhuman battles.

PAGE 44 — DOCTOR KA

Here are three plot seeds for Dr. Ka:

Doctor Ka's astral self appears to the PCs. It can't talk for some reason, but it's got an anxious expression on its face and seems to be appealing for the PCs' help with frantic gestures. Will they go with it? Is Dr. Ka really in trouble, or is it a trap?

The supervillain Anubis (*Conquerors, Killers, And Crooks*, page 118) starts a strange crime spree in Vibora Bay. Doctor Ka comes to the PCs, claiming there's more to Anubis's conduct than meets the eye (though he won't say exactly what), and asks for their help before "the minions of the Dark Serpent are freed."

Doctor Ka believes Skarn the Shaper (*The Mystic World*, page 98) is about to attack the Earth. He asks the PCs to accompany him on a journey to the Congeries to make a pre-emptive strike that will scare Skarn away.

PAGE 48 — LESSER MYSTICS

The mystics listed in the main text are ones known to the general public (though the public isn't necessarily aware that they have mystic powers — Sofia Labat, for example, is mostly known just as a skilled midwife). One who isn't so well-known is Gilbert Matthews.

Matthews was born in 1901 in Vibora Bay, and lived a full and happy life running a bookstore in Weston and occasionally dabbling in the occult. When he reached the age of eighty, he met a mysterious being whose identity was hidden by dark robes. This being offered him the opportunity to live his life again. Matthews was uncertain. His life had been a fine one, but would he want to do it all again? He knew enough of magic to fear there would be some horrible catch. Nevertheless, his fear of dying overcame his concerns, and he agreed at last to the mysterious figure's offer. From that point on, Matthews' aging began, slowly, to reverse itself. With each passing year, Matthews becomes younger. A few years ago the physical improvements to his body were becoming noticeable, so he sold his store and belongings and went on a trip, later spreading the word that he had died on the journey. Adopting the new identity of Matthew Gilbert, he moved back to the city and has taken up the study of magic with renewed vigor, trying to determine who the robed figure was and how exactly his life has been extended. He now appears to be in his late fifties, and works days in the box office of the Vibora Bay Symphony Orchestra.



PAGE 50 — MONIQUE FONTAINE

Fontaine is actually a VIPER Nest Leader — see page 126.

PAGE 51 — EDWARD WARWICK

As discussed on page 41 of *VIPER: Coils Of The Serpent*, Dr. Warwick is not the kindly research scientist he seems. No doubt his “sickle cell anemia” experiments are part of Project Bumblebee or one of his other sinister projects.

PAGE 52 — VILLAINS

The rumors that actual supervillains sometimes use Villains as a haberdashery are true, though it doesn't happen all that often. The store's owners are *very* discreet and cautious about the whole thing — the rumors were just made up by imaginative customers, they weren't spread by anyone who really knows anything — and are paid very well for their services and their silence.

PAGE 52 — HAPPY BOB'S PAWNSHOP AND LOAN

The rumors about Happy Bob are quite true: he often provides information to the police (and even superheroes)... and yet at the same time surreptitiously deals drugs and sometimes trafficks in stolen items.

PAGE 53 — A DIRTY, POORLY LIT PLACE FOR BOOKS

The general description of this store is 100% accurate. The rumors of its trove of long-lost mystic texts are, on the other hand, mostly exaggerated. It's true that it has a much larger and better “Occult” section than most used bookstores, but the odds of

a character actually finding a grimoire or college-level conjuration textbook are slim, at best... unless, of course, you need for them to...

PAGE 54 — VIBORA CARMESI

Despite the overwhelming references to vipers, nests, and snakes in this art's traditions, Vibora Carmesi is utterly unrelated to VIPER, African snake-god cults, Nama, or anything of that sort. It's pure coincidence.

PAGE 54 — REDSNAKE

The source of the red serpent idol that gave Redsnake his superhuman physique is a true mystery. The idol apparently came with no strings attached, so it probably wasn't from an evil mystical group, but no one knows for sure.

Here are three plot seeds for Redsnake:

Diabolical Idol: Redsnake goes nuts. With glowing red eyes, strength seemingly increased tenfold, and a newfound resistance to harm, he attacks police, criminals, even other heroes. The PCs must learn what caused this change and rectify it. Maybe that mysterious red serpent idol newly arrived in the Vibora Bay Museum of Antiquities is behind this somehow....

Guns Don't Kill People; Whips Do: Redsnake becomes increasingly ill, finally falling into a coma. Doctors specializing in superhuman medicine suspect his energy whip is the culprit — it's given him some kind of radiation sickness. Trouble is, the whip's missing, and the doctors can't bring Redsnake around without it. The PCs need to find the whip and figure out what's threatening Redsnake's life... especially since whoever has the whip now may also be in danger.



Showdown At Sundown: An unknown superhuman arrives in Vibora Bay claiming to be the true champion of Vibora Carmesi. He challenges Redsnake to a showdown. Redsnake's code of honor compels him to agree, and the mystery man defeats him easily. Now the PCs must stop the newcomer as he runs rampant in the city. The weird thing is, martial arts experts swear the new guy isn't using Vibora Carmesi at all. Who is this guy, and what does he really want?

PAGE 59 — CAFFREY AIR FORCE BASE

The "UFO sightings" are, as the text implies, mistaken — they result from test flights, missile tests, and other such mundane (if highly secret) Air Force activity. But of course, aliens might be using this as cover for their own insidious activities, if you prefer....

PAGE 59 — THE HIGH APOSTOLIC CHURCH

Naturally, there's more to the High Apostolic Church than meets the eye.

The members of the Convocation are among the few inhabitants of the Queen City with some inkling of its prophesied role as a final battleground between the forces of Heaven and Hell (though neither they nor their religion has any connection with Therakiel; he didn't inspire it, it simply arose in the atmosphere of mysticism his activities created, like a flower that sprouts in a garden intended for growing tomatoes). They're also aware that Robert Caliburn is apparently a major factor in this conflict, whether for good or ill. Although The Convocation members sees the High Apostolic Church as a force for good, they are as of yet unwilling to take any decisive actions outside of "disfellowshipping" Brethren they catch consorting with the Dark Saints (or DEMON for that matter). As the conflict develops further, revealing exactly who is on what side, it's reasonable to expect The Convocation to begin taking a more active hand in an attempt to protect their congregation as well as the city they love.

The worship of the Dark Saints — as the powerful supervillains some Brethren now offer up prayers to are known — isn't just a modern problem. The truth is there's *always* been an element of the congregation that's been willing to use the power to appeal to the Saints for selfish or cruel ends, or who follow Saints of decidedly less kindly bent than the ones listed in the main text. While today they focus their prayers on certain supervillains (particularly Dark Seraph and Takofanes), in times past they chose demons or the like — the motivations and end result are the same. These Brethren keep their practices as secret as possible, conducting their ceremonies outside of the tabernacles or when the tabernacles are otherwise empty, but the Church has periodically caught on and purged them from the congregation. (Though many of the disfellowshipped continue worshipping the Dark Saints on their own, of course.) Some of the "Dark Brethren" are also members of DEMON, or at least highly susceptible to its recruitment practices (see *DEMON: Servants Of Darkness*).

Plot Seeds

Here are some plot seeds for the Church and its members:

The First Church Of The Destroyer: Doctor Destroyer has stumbled across the existence of that tiny fraction of the Brethren who worship him as an evil god. He quickly decides he can use the new religion to conquer the world, attaining success where all of his other schemes have failed! Through a combination of violence, technological "miracles," and cold, hard cash he's begun to take over the High Apostolic Church. Can the PCs stop him before he uses Vibora Bay as a launching pad for his new cult of personality?

Outside Influences: Weary of DEMON's constant attempts at infiltration, the Convocation has decided to strike back. It's discovered the exact location of the evil organization's main Vibora Bay Demonhome and has decided to attack it. Will the PCs help it rid the city of this magical menace once and for all, or will they leave the (more or less mundane) Brethren to face the evils of DEMON on their own... and almost certainly get massacred?

Shadow Rising: One of the followers of the Dark Saints, eager for the power to take over the company he works for and kick his boss to the curb, has through his worship ceremonies and sacrifices unleashed... *something*... he can't identify, much less control. This malevolent being (a demon? a spirit? a god? an extradimensional horror?) is committing all sorts of horrific acts around the city, and occasionally forcing him to participate. Can the PCs solve the mystery and stop this being's rampage? And what happens if the selfish Brother discovers he actually *likes* being thoroughly evil?

CHAPTER FOUR

PAGE 65 — CORRUPTION IN THE VYPD

Former Police Chief John Paris was firmly in the pocket of Guy Sweetland. He took extensive payoffs from the corpulent mobster to make policy decisions that subtly kept Sweetland's hierarchy safe from coordinated police activity. He also led an extensive network of corrupt cops who provided Sweetland's gang with information, access, and security. While Commissioner Chamberlain (and others) suspected Paris of being corrupt (and a small number of his assorted shady deals have come to light, thanks to the extensive efforts of a few journalists), she and the rest of the city had and have no idea of the magnitude of the problem.

Paris's firing (and subsequent move to a nice home in Seagrove Beach, thanks to the "success of his investments") has left Sweetland in a bit of a jam. He still owns Assistant Chief O'Guinn, whom he and Paris had been maneuvering into becoming the logical successor, but neither of his superiors like or trust him — and O'Guinn is too blunt and unsubtle to work his way into either Chamberlain's or Buford's good graces. Without a presence at the top, Sweetland fears his extensive investment in the

VBPB power structure may become less efficient and wasteful. Neither Chamberlain nor Buford seem to be very good candidates for “purchase,” so Sweetland is carefully considering his options. Ideally, he’d like to get something blackmail-worthy on one or both of them and restore his control of the hierarchy that way. To that end he has several of his best muckrakers and unethical private investigators thoroughly looking into the backgrounds of both. Buford has cheated on his wife Jessica several times, and Sweetland has considered exploring that avenue, but is unsure Buford would be willing to compromise his ethics rather than have that revealed. Chamberlain has no apparent skeletons in her closet — at least, not that Sweetland’s found, which frustrates him greatly.

His other choice, which he’s recently decided may be necessary, is to remove one or both of them by force. Buford would probably be easier, since as a successful cop with a long career he must have made some enemies... but an “accident” could certainly happen to either of them. If Sweetland gets his way, PC heroes may soon find themselves investigating the murder of a police chief, with a new chief who’s strangely unhelpful....

PAGE 67 — THE MARS TEAM

Benjamin Lucas belongs to the Order of the Guardians (see below), and keeps his eyes and ears open as their representative in the MARS team.

Phillip Van da Larr comes from a family that’s distantly related to the infamous Vandaleur clan of the Mystic World. He doesn’t know anything about the Vandaleurs, though, and doesn’t possess any mystic powers he knows of. His luck (Luck 4d6) is a sort of subconscious manifestation of latent mystic abilities, but given his age and temperament the odds of his ever developing other powers are slim.

The Order Of The Guardians

In 1922, former Trismegistus Council member Maximillian Scattergood founded a group called the Order of the Guardians. Scattergood feared that infighting among the Council hampered its ability to react quickly to new threats. He wanted his own set of watchdogs on the streets of Vibora Bay, which his own oracular spells told him would be a crucial battleground in the battle between good and evil at some point in the future.

Drawing heavily upon symbolism and an air of mystery, Scattergood’s lodge attracted officers with an interest in mysticism, albeit little aptitude for it, and taught them to recognize dark magic when they encountered it. “Grand Master” Scattergood died just a few years after the Order’s inception, without the Trismegistus Council ever learning of its existence, or the Order ever learning it was essentially a splinter group of the Council. Deprived of Scattergood’s guidance and knowledge, the Order gradually lost most of its arcane knowledge, and today maintains the forms of its traditions with little understanding of their significance. However, the members remain alert for signs of dark magic, and do what they can to combat it when they stumble over it. The Order of the Guardians has only a few members, since it prefers to

emphasize secrecy over numbers.

PAGE 72 — AMPHIBIAN

Here are three plot seeds for Amphibian:

A tattered piece of what appears to be Amphibian’s costume washes up on the beach near Vibora Bay. What’s happened to the ecologically-minded hero, who hasn’t been seen in days?

According to media reports, someone resembling Amphibian was seen helping radical environmentalists attack and sink an empty oil tanker out in the Gulf of Mexico. Amphibian hasn’t responded to these charges... or, in fact, contacted any of his friends or acquaintances in a couple of weeks. Has he finally gone rogue?

Amphibian discovers that a local ACI subsidiary is covering up a massive pollution problem it created. Rightly wary of taking on an institution as powerful as ACI, he’s asked the PCs for help. Are the PCs willing to take a stand to do the right thing, even if it means making an enemy of Franklin Stone and having their names dragged through the mud?

PAGE 75 — BROTHER THUNDER

Here are three plot seeds for Brother Thunder:

Declaring that he’s been appointed a member of the Fashion Police, the supervillain Foxbat shows up in Vibora Bay with the declared intention of teaching Brother Thunder a little sartorial respect. Wackiness ensues.

Something goes wrong, and Brother Thunder’s Zombie Freedom Power stops destroying zombies... and starts *strengthening* them! It also seems to make the dead arise as zombies, if used too close to a corpse or graveyard. What’s happened, and how can the PCs help him correct the problem?

Brother Thunder went out for a walk one night and never returned. Sister Rain can’t seem to locate him, and has asked the PCs to help her find out what’s happened to him.

PAGE 78 — SISTER RAIN

Here are three plot seeds for Sister Rain:

Who’s Sister Rain’s father? Could he be some Silver Age hero or villain, such as Dr. Macabre? A demon? A loa manifested in human form? Something else? And whoever he is, what schemes (sinister or otherwise) might he have in mind for his daughter?

Sister Rain seems to be spending a *lot* of time letting a strange new loa “ride” her. This loa, who apparently calls herself Lashemba, seems rather capricious, sometimes even cruel... though there’s no question that she’s magically powerful. Has Sister Rain accidentally been ensnared by some sort of malevolent spirit?

The city plans to shut down the Pierre Street Community Center on the basis of a long list of decidedly minor zoning violations and other infractions of obscure city ordinances. Sister Rain suspects there’s more going on than meets the eye, and asks the PCs to look into the matter for her.

PAGE 81 — JURYRIG

Here are three plot seeds for Juryrig:

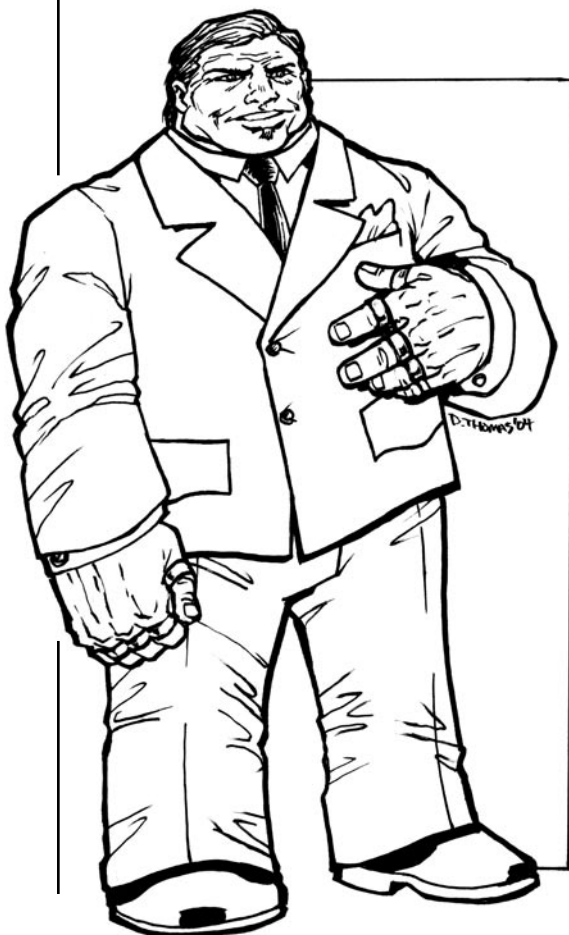
Augie just up and disappears one day. No one has any idea what's happened. After his own investigations quickly reach a dead end, Juryrig asks the PCs to help him find the boy.

Juryrig gets wind of a major new VIPER crime offensive that's about to begin. He contacts the PCs for help, telling them he thinks they can work together to stop the scheme before it gets started. Is he right, or has VIPER planted an elaborate trap?

Juju B is coming to town! As a *major* Juju B fan, Juryrig jumps at the chance to serve as the rapper's bodyguard while he's in Vibora Bay (a publicity stunt dreamed up by one of B's managers). As the PCs realize, this is likely to do more harm than good, since it will probably attract VIPER or some other villain to attack, but Juryrig refuses to be dissuaded from taking his "dream job."

PAGE 85 — GUY SWEETLAND

As the main text makes clear, Sweetland is as dirty as they come in Vibora Bay. He's a capable mobster, but prefers intimidation to actual violence (which he leaves to his henchmen). He's actually quite reasonable to deal with as long as others show him the proper respect and he receives his appropriate cut of the proceeds of any criminal activity in his territory — he's fair and honest as gangsters go. However, he has a ferocious temper if he feels he's



been disrespected or mocked, which usually manifests in a flurry of Cajun and French obscenities and red-in-the-face screaming. These "storms," while violent, pass quickly, and he's entirely capable of alternating them with surprising kindness and generous gifts once he's been mollified.

Sweetland owns several corrupt police officials; one of them was Commissioner Paris before he was exposed. The other persons arrested in conjunction with the Paris scandal were mid-level employees of Sweetland's, but as the main text notes he carefully and cleverly hid all connections to himself.

The Sweetland children are an unusual lot. Sofia, easily the smartest of the brood, runs much of the day-to-day operations of her father's mob with the assistance of her not-very-bright husband, Ernest Vanasse, her brother Neil (who handles a lot of the "face time" with crooks who'd be uncomfortable having a woman being in charge), and Bertram Calloway. Clay is a chef-in-training himself, currently serving an "apprenticeship" in a four-star Paris hotel, and Althea attends a private high school in Marseilles and returns every summer.

Jean-Claude Dupuy's real name is Harold Edley. He's not from France; he was born in Seminole Hills.

GUY SWEETLAND

13	STR	9	DEX	12	CON
15	BODY	18	INT	19	EGO
20	PRE	10	COM		
5	PD	3	ED	4	SPD
5	REC	24	END	28	STUN

Abilities: Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED); Various Contacts and Favors (Various City Leaders and Celebrities); Fringe Benefit (Mob Leader); Wealthy; Danger Sense (Out of Combat, Immediate Vicinity, 11-); Bribery 13, High Society 14-, KS: French Cuisine 14-, KS: History of Cuisine 11-, AK: Vibora Bay 13-, KS: Vibora Bay's Underworld 14-, KS: Mob Operations 13-, L: French (fluent), Oratory 13-, PS: French Chef 13-, PS: Restaurateur 14-, PS: Mob Boss 14-, Streetwise 13-, WF: Small Arms and Blades

Disadvantages: DNPC: Family, DNPC: Staff of Sweetland's, DF: Obese, DF: Outrageous French Accent (sometimes), Watched: Vibora Bay Law Enforcement, Hunted: Black Mask X, Physical Limitation: Obese, Psychological Limitation: Arrogant, Psychological Limitation: Greedy And Controlling, Psychological Limitation: Old-Fashioned, Social Limitation: Famous

Notes: Sweetland was born in Vibora Bay in 1944, and at an early age went to work as an apprentice chef at the Frontenac, a well-regarded French restaurant in Duval. The Frontenac was a favorite of notorious mob boss Flavio Bondi, a cousin of the Buoniconti family of New York City's La Cosa Nostra. One afternoon Guy made the gangster an excellent carpaccio, and Bondi insisted on meeting the youngster who'd prepared it. Bondi took a liking to the bold, chubby teen who showed no fear of meeting the notorious killer. He took Sweetland under his wing, giving him an education in the inner workings of the mob at the same time he was mastering the intricacies of fine French cuisine.

Bondi died in 1972, but by then Sweetland had taken over a large portion of his operations and separated them from the declining Buoniconte criminal empire. At the same time, he opened his own restaurant and began to use it as both a legitimate business front and headquarters for his various criminal enterprises. His fortunes in both fields rose rapidly, and since 1980 or so Sweetland has ruled the Easton underworld with very little challenge.

Sweetland controls much of the organized crime in Easton from his offices and lounge upstairs at Sweetland's (page 99), focusing primarily on the traditional strengths of the Mafia he inherited his empire from: loansharking, illegal gambling, prostitution, protection rackets, and taking cuts from various traditional robberies and burglaries. He traffics in narcotics, but finds the process (and the addicts) personally distasteful, so he has intermediaries handle that. He has a sharp mind and runs his businesses efficiently, though some of his younger soldiers wish he had a more open mind about new avenues of crime (like computer hacking — Sweetland doesn't understand or trust computers; he even regularly audits the work of his manager Samara Bellar on the restaurant's financials by hand). He is no longer in love with his wife, though he respects her enough to keep his various affairs tastefully quiet, and he does love his kids. He's very concerned with his public reputation. Though he doesn't mind the occasional hint that he's "connected," which he considers good for business, he'd be very unhappy if his full involvement with the local mobs were revealed.

PAGE 85 — CLARK ROBINSON

The information reported on Robinson in the main text — his (and his gang's) background, when he took over the gang, who his lieutenants are, and so forth — is largely accurate. You may want to change a few details just to keep the PCs on their toes.

Under Robinson's stewardship the Big Picture has become even more profitable and dangerous than Sweetland's own rival operations in Easton. However, it lacks the Sweetland mob's sophisticated organization, high level of security, and behind-the-scenes political and social influence. Robinson may be richer, but Sweetland is far more powerful.

Robinson owns a fair amount of Weston real estate through a series of umbrella corporations, primarily apartment buildings and shopping malls, but also a couple of nightclubs and the radio station WKJP.

Robinson's Top Men

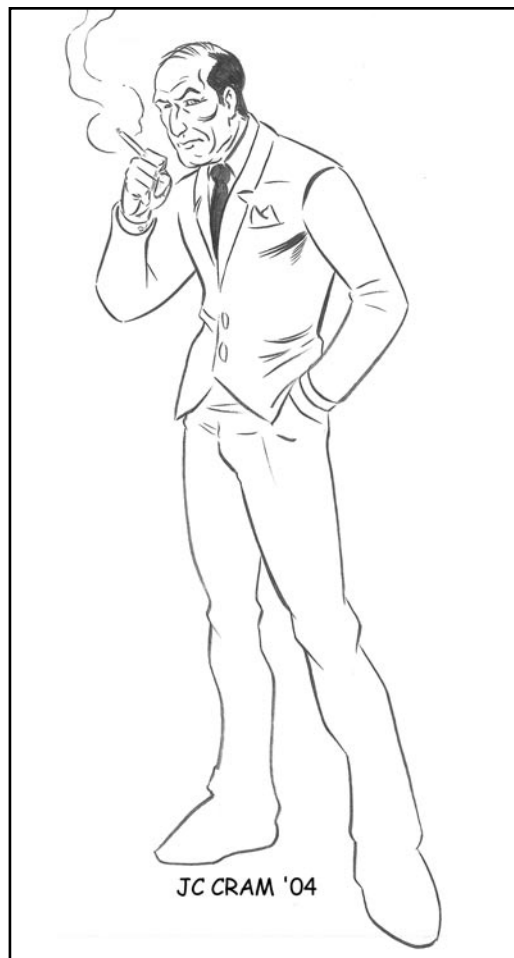
On the street, the Money Kings are generally known as Robinson's "teacher's pets." He admires their proclaimed devotion to capitalism and "getting paid" above all other considerations and frequently uses their members on "special" jobs.

Marcello Bocchieri is from a respected Mafia family that belonged to the Bondi mob until Guy Sweetland took over. His father felt Sweetland wasn't really qualified to run the Bondi operations and quit the Easton mob to go freelance as a profes-

sional "shooter" when Marcello was in his teens. He did a lot of work for the Shadows in the Eighties, though the VBPB isn't aware of that. Marcello himself joined the Big Picture in 1987, gradually rising to his current level of authority.

PAGE 86 — COURTNEY OLMACHER

Unknown to anybody but Robinson, Olmacher is the Big Picture's most potent secret weapon. He's a moderately powerful telepath (Ego Attack 5d6, Mind Control 12d6, Telepathy 13d6, along with some Mental Defense) who uses his abilities to secretly determine the honesty and loyalty of everyone Robinson comes in contact with. Olmacher's information has allowed Robinson to thwart efforts at infiltration by both law enforcement and criminal rivals, as well as make very successful business deals and investments that have swollen the Big Picture's coffers. Robinson trusts Olmacher because he knows the man is a physical coward and has no desire to actually run an organization as violent as the Big Picture, and also knows what his life would be worth if he ever betrayed Robinson. He's right — Olmacher is a modest and shy man who's quite content to serve as a behind-the-scenes advisor and enjoy the fruits of their combined successes. Only Dreggs even suspects the true nature of Olmacher's services, and since he's also currently loyal to Robinson he's kept them to himself. Should Robinson ever disappoint Dreggs or show signs of weakness, Dreggs could be convinced to make a play for the top seat and try to



hire or bully Olmacher into helping.

Heroes who discover Olmacher's abilities might use that information against Robinson, either by threatening to reveal Olmacher's powers publicly (which would anger Robinson's business associates, who'd assume they'd been manipulated even in deals they were previously happy with), or more subtly by threatening or convincing Olmacher into giving Robinson bad information. While Robinson trusts Olmacher now, if his advice began turning sour he'd show little loyalty.

PAGE 87 — THE SOVEREIGN SONS

Despite their fearsome reputation, there's really not much more to the Sovereign Sons than there appears: it's a posse of greedy, amoral, heavily-armed young men who not only don't shirk from violence, they actively enjoy it. They have no fear of the cops or superheroes, much less their competition on the street, and that makes them dangerous indeed. For a typical member of the Sons, use the Skilled Agent on page 177 of *Champions*, but replace the Blaster with traditional weapons (primarily 9mm submachine guns, large-caliber handguns, and shotguns), remove the Armored Uniform and Radio, and give him the *Streetwise* Skill.

Blaze and the other designer drugs the Sons sell come from illicit laboratories in the Caribbean. They're smuggled in via small transport businesses the Sons secretly own, in agricultural shipments, and so on. Since a small quantity of Blaze goes a long way on the street, it's easy enough to hide

among legal goods coming into Vibora Bay.

The Baron himself is the Sons' biggest secret. The stories on the street about him are pure nonsense; he doesn't possess any magic powers. But that's not to say he's an ordinary man. The *original* Baron was — he's the Jamaican political boss-turned-gangster the main text describes. But three years ago Mr. Gemini (page 152) killed him and had one of his Duplicates take the Baron's place. Most of the Sovereign Sons didn't even notice anything was different, partly because of Mr. Gemini's abilities (even though Gemini can't precisely imitate other people's appearance, he can make himself look "sort of" like the Baron), but largely because they don't see the Baron all that often. The few who thought the Baron was acting a little oddly couldn't quite put their finger on why, and eventually forgot all about it. Today none of the Sons has the faintest suspicion their leader is an outsider who's manipulating them for his own purposes.

PAGE 89 — TRADER JACK

A few underworld figures know they can contact Trader Jack by placing a classified ad in the pages of the *VB View*, listing a specific collection of antiques one has available for sale. Even finding this much out should be difficult for PCs who want to reach him. It's up to you whether Trader Jack is just an ordinary (if strange) information broker, or actually has superhuman powers. He might be a mystical being — perhaps demonic in nature, or a mage afflicted with a curse only to do business by barter. He might even be a Sylvestri or a Vandaleur, creating other connections to the Mystic World you can exploit for plot purposes. Or, he might be what he appears: an eccentric old man with the most impressive Rolodex in the city.

VIPER

The information in the main text is misleading — it's not that VIPER isn't an important part of the Viboran underworld, it's that it's kept a lower, more sinister profile since the loss of the Compound. The diabolical criminal agency has its tendrils spread throughout Vibora Bay. Like most major urban centers, the Queen City offers ample opportunity for the unscrupulous to gain at the expense of others... and the boys in green are nothing if not opportunists. Four Nests operate in the area: one major centralized Nest ("the Warehouse"); a minor Nest affiliated with the Warehouse ("the BusiNest"); and two minor independent Nests ("the Red Nest" and "Tubman's Tunnel"). VIPER also maintains an agent training complex ("The Sticks") about fifty miles east of the city.

The Warehouse

Concealed within and below a huge old ramshackle building on the Weston Shore waterfront is "the Warehouse," VIPER's largest Nest in Vibora Bay. Nest Leader Monique Fontaine oversees a force of roughly forty agents, about a quarter of whom



are trained Aquatic Combat Specialist agents, plus another dozen command and support personnel. The Warehouse serves not only as a profitable and successful Nest in its own right, but also as a major port of entry for VIPER technology, goods, and personnel coming into the United States.

LOCATION AND ACCESS

Above ground, the Warehouse looks like just another crumbling dockside eyesore. Artfully staged grime, broken windows, and pest infestations convincingly portray the building as an abandoned warehouse. A “For Lease” sign hangs in the window, but calling the number displayed on it results in a “this number has been disconnected” message. Phone company records indicate a defunct real estate management firm last owned the number. Tired old night watchmen shuffle around the building at night, shooing off transients and trying not to nap openly. These men are actually retired VIPER agents, well paid to do nothing but serve as misguiding window dressing.

On rare occasions, the authorities get suspicious of the warehouse and start associating it with criminal activity. When that happens, the “night watchmen” become mysteriously lax, and Fontaine assigns an Underworld Operations Specialist agent to subtly trick smalltime hoods or smugglers into setting up shop in the building. A few weeks pass, an anonymous tipster contacts the VBPD or Coast Guard, and *voilà...* the authorities “catch” the criminals operating out of the warehouse, then shift their attentions elsewhere.

Below ground, it’s a different situation altogether. A full-fledged, high-tech VIPER base lurks beneath the rundown warehouse and coastal harbor waters. Large enough to house the entire Nest complement, the Warehouse proper fills a great deal more space than the building above ground suggests. It has all the usual VIPER base amenities, including barracks, laboratories, workout and training facilities, meeting rooms, offices, recreation areas, a cafeteria, and a secure computer data center and control room. In the southwest part of the base, a docking facility opens onto a subterranean canal built into an abandoned sewer tunnel (see below), which eventually passes through a sealed and concealed portal into the bay itself.

Since frequent traffic through a supposedly abandoned building would be too conspicuous, base personnel generally don’t enter through the decoy warehouse above (though it does hide an extremely well concealed and secured emergency entrance). Instead, several access points throughout the Weston Shore neighborhood, concealed in basements, underground parking garages, storm drains, and the like lead into a section of the city’s old sewer system. Agents then access the base itself from the sewer tunnel, which runs along on the west side of the base. VIPER collapsed surrounding tunnels in the abandoned sewers, cleaning up this section and leaving it disconnected from

the rest of the system. Since the old sewers emptied directly into the bay, VIPER built a deepwater canal into the existing tunnel track, providing the Nest with direct access to the harbor.

ACTIVITIES

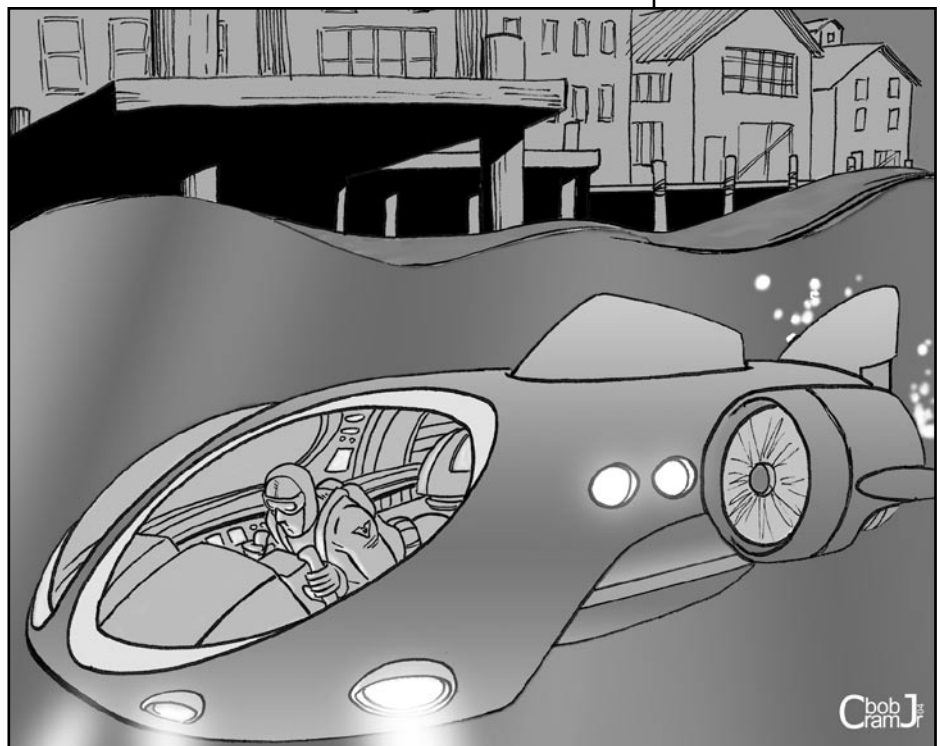
Smuggling, robbery, and “piracy” (stealing from ships in the harbor, often docked) form the backbone of the Warehouse’s criminal operations. Utilizing cutting-edge aquatic and amphibious VIPER technology, including three Sea Serpent Mini-Subs, agents at the Warehouse joke (not without reason) that they have more control over goings-on in the bay than the police or Coast Guard do. Even when well secured against landward threats, many ships and dockside buildings present easy targets for penetration from the bay side. The Nest’s Mini-Subs also assist with smuggling, often rendezvousing with ships outside the harbor to pick up incoming cargo or deliver out-bound illicit goods.

The Warehouse takes in VIPER gear and goods from overseas, then distributes it to Nests throughout the southeastern United States. VIPER’s Financial Division allots the Warehouse additional resources to cover this “administrative” responsibility. The additional revenue helps to pay the salaries of the relatively rare Aquatic Combat Specialist agents.

As a noted businesswoman, knowledgeable in matters of finance and corporate chicanery, Monique Fontaine indulges more than most Nest Leaders in “white collar” schemes such as insurance fraud, money laundering, and industrial espionage. In fact, she became so adept at these sorts of crimes, and expanded the Nest’s reach into those arenas so much, that the Nest ultimately wasn’t large enough to contain all the agents it needed. Smuggling and internal VIPER distribution required Aquatic Specialists, robbery and other general criminal

SLINGIN’ THE LINGO

The information in this section draws heavily from *VIPER: Coils Of The Serpent*. That book more fully defines many terms used here, such as Nest categories, leader personality types, agent personality types, equipment descriptions, and so on. If you’re planning to use VIPER extensively in your campaign, you should consider getting *VIPER*, but in most cases references here should be sufficiently self-explanatory that you can improvise without any difficulty even if you don’t have that sourcebook.



ventures required the usual array of general agents, and the white collar schemes increasingly required Infiltration and Computer Specialists. Eventually, there was simply no more room at the inn. Fontaine founded a satellite Nest in the Financial District, closer to the modern center of business in the city (see “the BusiNest” below), to specialize in white collar criminal operations.

SUBSIDIARIES

Nest Leader Fontaine excels at blending legitimate businesses with VIPER operations. Several such quasi-legitimate enterprises secretly function under the auspices of the Warehouse, including:

VTransit: This prosperous local trucking company (see page 49) serves as both Monique Fontaine’s respectable public face (she’s its CEO) and the Warehouse’s primary means of moving illegal material in Vibora Bay. A VTransit subsidiary, Gulf Transit Lines, uses its trucks, with concealed cargo compartments hidden amongst legitimate freight, to ship VIPER goods to Nests outside the local area. Both companies also handle plenty of perfectly legal business, and most of their employees have no idea they ultimately work for VIPER.

First Harbor Security: Over the course of several years, Monique Fontaine gradually and secretly infiltrated and bought controlling interest in First Harbor Security. One of the oldest and most highly-respected contract security firms in Vibora Bay, FHS specializes in safeguarding companies and assets near the city’s waterfront. With several undercover agents now placed within FHS, it provides an ideal cover for surveillance operations and sabotage missions around the harbor. Fontaine takes care not to use FHS as a Trojan Horse too frequently or too openly, however. If its reputation for providing reliable security suffers, the very clients VIPER wants to spy on will take their security contracts elsewhere. For the most part, FHS *does* provide diligent security, and (as with VTransit) most of its employees don’t suspect VIPER’s covert control.

MONIQUE FONTAINE

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
13	STR	3	12-	Lift 151 kg; 2½d6 [3]
15	DEX	15	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
13	CON	6	12-	
12	BODY	4	11-	
19	INT	9	13-	PER Roll 13-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
23	PRE	13	14-	PRE Attack: 4½d6
18	COM	4	13-	
4	PD	1		Total: 4 PD (0 rPD)
4	ED	1		Total: 4 ED (0 rED)
3	SPD	5		Phases: 4, 8, 12
6	REC	0		
26	END	0		
30	STUN	4		Total Characteristic Cost: 75

Movement: Running: 7"/14"

Cost

Powers

END

Martial Arts: VIPER Brawling				
	Maneuver	OCV	DCV	Notes
4	Block	+2	+2	Block, Abort
4	Dodge	--	+5	Dodge, Affects All Attacks, Abort
4	Punch	+0	+2	4½d6 Strike
3	Throw	+0	+1	2½d6 +v/5, Target Falls
10	Fortune Favors The Bold: Luck 2d6 0			
2	Strong Runner: Running +1" (7" total) 1			
Perks				
6	Fringe Benefit: Membership (VIPER Commandant)			
10	Money: Wealthy			
Skills				
10	+1 Overall			
3	Acting 14-			
3	Bribery 14-			
3	Bureaucratics 14-			
1	Computer Programming 8-			
3	Concealment 13-			
3	Conversation 14-			
3	Deduction 13-			
3	Disguise 13-			
3	High Society 14-			
3	Interrogation 14-			
2	AK: Greater Vibora Bay Area (outlying communities, surrounding land, harbor and coastal waterways, and so on) 11-			
4	CK: Vibora Bay 14-			
1	KS: Arcane And Occult Lore 8-			
5	KS: Business 15-			
3	KS: Local Underworld 13-			
3	KS: The Superhuman World 13-			
3	KS: Vibora Bay Business Community 13-			
5	KS: VIPER 15-			
3	Language: French (completely fluent; English is Native)			
3	Lipreading 13-			
1	Lockpicking 8-			
3	Oratory 14-			
3	Persuasion 14-			

- 3 PS: Businesswoman 13-
- 3 PS: VIPER Agent 13-
- 1 Security Systems 8-
- 3 Seduction 14-
- 3 Shadowing 13-
- 3 Stealth 12-
- 3 Streetwise 14-
- 1 Tactics 8-
- 1 Teamwork 8-
- 3 WF: Small Arms, Blades

Total Powers & Skill Cost: 144

Total Cost: 219

50+ Disadvantages

- 10 Hunted: VIPER 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Watching)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Ambitious And Opportunistic (Very Common, Moderate)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Casual Killer (Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Places Profit Above All Other Things (Common, Strong)
- 5 Rivalry: Professional (other Nest Leaders)
- 15 Social Limitation: Subject To Orders (Frequently, Major)
- 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (maintains a double life as both trucking company CEO and VIPER Nest Leader) (Frequently, Major)
- 79 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 219

Background/History: As the daughter of a two-bit crook, Monique Fontaine learned early in life how to make crime pay. She just looked at her father and did the opposite of everything he did. He hired on for other criminals' jobs; she led her own schemes. He committed crimes on impulse, snatching a few bucks when the opportunity presented itself; she planned her crimes carefully, and only spent time on lucrative undertakings. He thought he knew it all; she recognized how little she knew, and set out to learn. He hung out with riff-raff all the time, just another pea in the underworld pod; she associated with respectable businessmen, a young go-getter on the fast track to success. He shuttled in and out of prison for years; she swore to die before setting foot in a penitentiary. Yes, Vernon Fontaine was a fine father and an instructive example, no question about it. When Monique was 18, she arranged to have him dropped down an elevator shaft as her mother's 35th birthday present.

For several years, Monique continually reinvested gains from illegal sources into legitimate businesses, always careful not to tie the two together, or show too much wealth too quickly. Before the age of 30, she owned her own trucking company and assorted lesser holdings, while continuing to plan rewarding crimes untraceable to her. When she discovered VIPER surreptitiously infiltrating her VTransit trucking company, she got a better idea.

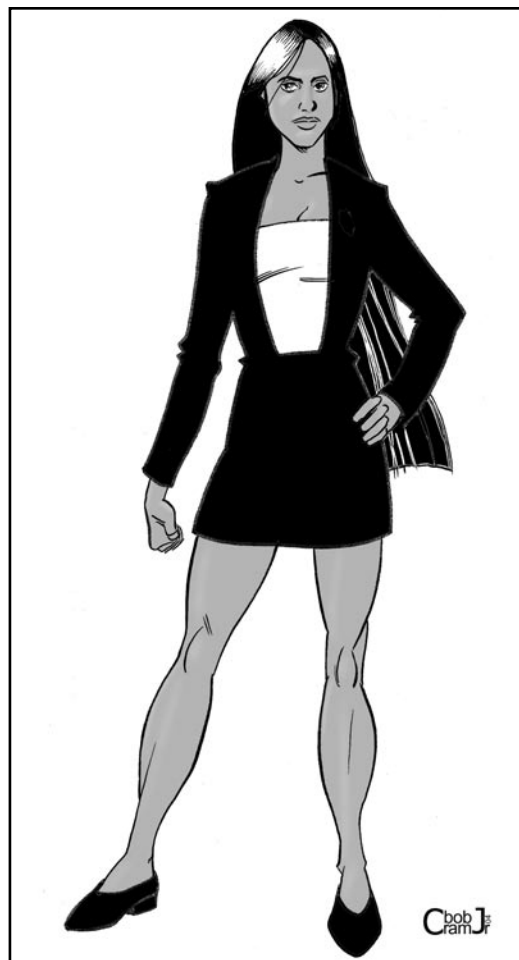
Hiring the best snoops in the business, Monique ferreted out the Warehouse's location and the identity of the Nest Leader. Bold as brass, she telephoned the man, offering to take him out to dinner to discuss selling him a controlling interest

in VTransit in exchange for him accepting her into VIPER. Blinded by greed and his own complacency, the fool agreed. After plying him at dinner with feminine wiles and drugged wine to make him tractable, she came back to the Nest with him, convincing the doped idiot to show her around... including the computer center and Serpentine. Too bad the slow-acting poison kicked in right about then. He'd been *so* helpful.

With access to Serpentine, she contacted the Council of Thirty directly and laid out the situation. She had liquidated the previous Nest Leader, infiltrated the Nest, and accessed their top-security computer network. However, she was also prepared to offer VIPER \$10 million in exchange for assuming the Nest leadership herself, and she outlined a detailed plan of action for increasing the Nest's income and influence under her guidance. Seeing that Monique embodied VIPER's Darwinistic ideals quite well, the Council agreed.

Unlike some other "outsiders" who've bought their way into VIPER, Monique respects the agency's traditions and abilities. Even though she already commanded her own Nest, she went through the VIPER Academy training shortly after taking over the Warehouse. This move also helped smooth over some of the ruffled feathers among Warehouse agents disgruntled by the "interloper's" takeover.

Personality/Motivation: Monique Fontaine combines intelligence, planning, charisma, and chilling brutality into a formidable and dangerous mix. Using



UNTIL's internal descriptions of typical Nest Leader behavior patterns, Fontaine qualifies as roughly equal parts of "The Respectable Businessman," "The Cunning Schemer," and "The Ruthless Bastard."

Raised in a home environment where crime was a way of life, the possibility of simply being a legitimate businesswoman never really occurred to Monique. Had she channeled her skills in that direction, she might be even wealthier today than she already is. Of course, the mainstream business world generally frowns on dropping enemies down elevator shafts, so the criminal life does hold certain satisfactions for Monique not available in another line of work.

As a Nest Leader she runs a tight ship, treating her agents professionally (unless she needs to kill them, of course) and expecting professional behavior from them in return. A firm believer in the aristocracy of talent, Monique elevates agents showing promise and initiative, and jettisons those dragging the Nest down. Betraying her on any level ensures a painful death for the traitor.

With the BusiNest already essentially functioning as an unofficial "satellite nest," Monique eyes the other local Nests speculatively. When the time is right, she plans to move against their Nest Leaders as necessary, and buck for General by seizing indirect control over the Red Nest and Tubman's Tunnel.

Monique looks after her mother, Marie. Even when she was young, it was more like she was in charge of the household and her mother the child, and today she shields Marie from the harsh realities of existence and ensures she has a comfortable life. But the truth is, Monique would kill Marie without a second thought if she thought it was necessary.

Quote: "How *nice* to see you again! *Do* sit down. I was so sorry to hear about your wife's sudden illness. *Such* a pity. Knowing how hospital bills can pile up, I just *had* to see if you'd reconsidered my generous buyout offer. Well, yes, it *is* lower than before; I understand your firm's profits have fallen while its founder spent time at the bedside of his sick wife. *C'est des affaires*. It would be a shame if her condition worsened even further. I hardly think you can afford that."

Powers/Tactics: Although proficient in standard VIPER combat techniques and such, Monique typically disdains carrying weapons or taking a personal hand in fighting her enemies. She just smiles pleasantly while arranging for their deaths. Of course, should it prove necessary, Monique would slit a man's throat from ear to ear without batting an eye. She's Machiavellian, not squeamish.

The crimes Monique plans for the Nest follow the same formula she used with such great success before joining VIPER: only spend time on jobs with hefty takes; do your homework meticulously before the job; never leave links between the job and you. She spends considerably less time in her Nest than most Nest Leaders do, recognizing the importance of maintaining her persona as a noteworthy Viboran businesswoman. She even served a term as president of the Vibora Bay Chamber of Commerce.

Though possessing no special powers, she has recently become interested in the occult. Not sharing the typical VIPER distaste for magic, she's quietly studied mystic history and lore over the last couple of years, even contacting local cults a few times in disguise. At some point, she may choose to dabble in it herself, though she hasn't thus far. She's begun to suspect, ever-so-dimly, that VIPER's roots may run deeper and farther back than the agency generally acknowledges.

Campaign Use: Monique Fontaine functions as a dangerous adversary for most PCs. Her methodical planning makes her harder to thwart than more "off-the-cuff" Nest Leaders, while her eerily callous disregard for human life sends a shiver down the spine.

Since the threat she personally represents does not usually involve combat, her power level should work acceptably in all campaigns (if you feel the need to weaken her, reduce her Skill list a little). If you're running a Vibora Bay campaign truly steeped in magic, consider expanding Fontaine's occult knowledge and giving her some mystical powers. If you're running a very four-color campaign, you may want to soften her predilection for casual murder.

As a Hunter, Fontaine is a very dangerous foe. Methodical, patient, and diligent, she gathers all the information she can about her quarry using VIPER's extensive resources, then strikes at the best possible moment (*i.e.*, when her foe is vulnerable or weakened) with all the force she can muster without causing problems for the Nest.

Appearance: Monique stands nearly six feet tall, a beautiful black woman with a thin, sleekly muscular body and flowing black hair reaching down her back. Her enemies see behind her disarming smile and graceful demeanor, spying the diabolical gleam in her eyes. She almost never wears VIPER paraphernalia, favoring sharp business attire with just a touch of unprofessional sexiness.

OTHER PERSONALITIES

Nest Leader Fontaine's powerful personality dominates the Warehouse, of course. But other interesting folk call the Warehouse home as well, including:

Captain Clyde Hellums, Field Commander

Hellums rose to the position of Field Commander three years ago after a string of blunders by the former Field Commander — and a string of lucrative successes for Hellums's squadron — led Nest Leader Fontaine to rid herself of the bumbler and promote Hellums. In the three years since his elevation, Hellums has gradually come to doubt the security of his post in the Nest. Fontaine rarely takes him into her confidence, and she seems to spend more time with the Intelligence Commander and Security Commander. Believing himself on the outs with his ruthless boss, Clyde has started considering ways to get away from her safely. Most of these tenuous plans feature arranging a move to another Nest somehow — he has no particular desire to tangle with Monique Fontaine, and prefers

field command over the idea of leading his own Nest or leaving VIPER.

Ironically, Hellums is the Commander Fontaine trusts most. She doesn't peer over his shoulder because she knows she doesn't need to, and she doesn't solicit his advice because she doesn't solicit *anyone's* advice. Should she learn that Hellums planned to leave the Warehouse, only *then* would his life be in danger from her. Clyde Hellums fits "The Professional" agent personality type, and has the Aquatic Combat Specialist and Scarlet Serpent Package Deals.

Captain Cassie Donelson, Intelligence Commander

Seen by many in the Nest as Fontaine's protégé and favorite, the arrogant Donelson spends half her time trying to alienate all the Combat and Technical staff in the Nest, and the other half trying to gather dirt on her own Intelligence personnel. The little time remaining goes into worming her way into Fontaine's good graces. Despite the common perception, Fontaine is starting to despise Donelson, and regrets promoting her to Commander. The Warehouse will likely need a new Intelligence Commander soon. Cassie has the Infiltration Specialist Package Deal, and mixes "The Guy With Big Plans" agent personality type with a healthy dose of "The Terrible Toadie."

Captain Dean Aikens, Security Commander

A holdover from before Fontaine's seizure of the Warehouse, Aikens loathes his Nest Leader. Unfortunately for him, he has no other options in VIPER than remaining here. Fontaine's penetration of Nest security years ago represents an enormous black mark on his service record; no other Nest would have him. So instead of leaving, he plots and schemes — he makes the witch think he respects her, all the while manipulating her into doing his bidding.

At least, that's *his* story. Fontaine knows full well what Aikens really thinks of her, and chooses to permit him to believe he pulls her strings, while in fact the reverse is true. His continued presence in the Nest demonstrates Fontaine's adherence to the old saw about keeping your friends close, but your enemies closer. She could simply exterminate him, but his transparent maneuvering amuses her. Dean Aikens has the Demolitions Specialist and Scarlet Serpent Package Deals, and fits the "Mr. Angry At The World" agent personality type.

Other Area Nests

In addition to the Warehouse, the Vibora Bay area suffers the depredations of three smaller Nests: the BusiNest; the Red Nest; and Tubman's Tunnel.

THE BUSINEST

For all intents and purposes, the BusiNest (pronounced like "business" with a "t" at the end) is "a wholly-owned subsidiary" of the Warehouse. Monique Fontaine actually suggested its creation to the Council of Thirty. Even though it took territory from her own Nest, she believed increasing VIPER's scope in the city in general would lead to enhanced

profitability all around... a prediction since proven true. Fontaine also personally recommended Clinton Marcoux — one of her top agents working on white collar crimes, and one of the few people in VIPER she essentially trusts — for the Nest Leader position.

Marcoux epitomizes "The Respectable Businessman" through and through. He respects Fontaine, and has thus far accepted suggestions she's offered regarding choice of crimes and methods, but he isn't quite the loyal follower she takes him for. Coming into his own as a Nest Leader, Marcoux increasingly feels the urge to make the BusiNest more his own baby. Fontaine counts on his backing should she maneuver for control over all the region's Nests, but he probably wouldn't follow such a plan. He enjoys his autonomy, and wouldn't care to see Fontaine assume a General's role.

Located in Kirkham Tower, an office tower in the Financial District, the BusiNest has an unusual personnel breakdown. Well over half of its agents are Intelligence Specialists, with only minimal contingents of Combat and Technical operatives. Focusing heavily on white collar crimes, the BusiNest employs overt force only in limited circumstances or as a last resort, if necessary "renting" agents and weaponry from the Warehouse.

THE RED NEST

In the outlying neighborhoods of Far Easton lies the Red Nest, a minor Nest of a dozen agents and a handful of additional staff. The Red Nest operates with a sort of split personality. Although most of its income results from straightforward burglaries in upscale Easton neighborhoods like Cluet Farms and Oldcorne, it's led by Guillermo Denardi, a true "Mad Scientist." To Denardi, the Nest serves solely to generate working capital and provide experimentation victims. As long as the bills get paid and the agents stay out of his hair, and he has resources for technological tinkering and a steady supply of human "lab animals," Denardi happily leaves the actual operation — and any remaining profits — in the hands of his Field Commander. A sadist at heart, most of Denardi's inventions and experiments involve new and creative ways to cause pain. The superhero Redsnake bears an energy whip of Denardi's invention, taken by the hero while foiling a Red Nest mission, and the Nest Leader would greatly like it returned.

TUBMAN'S TUNNEL

Housed beneath the streets of Inner Weston north of Cypress Palms Park, in an old hideout tunnel dating from slavery days, Tubman's Tunnel focuses on drug trafficking, small arms dealing, and manipulating gang activity. A gangbanger himself while growing up on the streets of Weston, Nest Leader Eric McCombs joined the ultimate gang at the tender age of eighteen. McCombs fit well in VIPER and rose quickly through the ranks, thanks in large part to his utter lack of morals and willingness to take on any job, no matter how repugnant. He now commands the Nest in his own backyard, exploiting and murdering neighbors and childhood friends in the name of power and a quick buck.

Running his Nest almost like a street gang, McCombs requires new Tubman's Tunnel agents to swear loyalty oaths, undergo hazing rituals, and get identifying tattoos. Should the upper echelons of VIPER learn of the tattoos, it could cost McCombs his Nest — such markings make it far too easy for law enforcement to link an agent to the organization, and make it difficult for agents to retire or go undercover safely. McCombs has a cautiously friendly relationship with Clark Robinson, and occasionally provides weapons or personnel for special jobs, but Robinson neither trusts him or VIPER enough to work any more closely with him. McCombs matches “The Greedy Grabber” Nest Leader behavior pattern.

THE STICKS

Located about fifty miles east of Vibora Bay, not far from the Bristol Highway en route to Tallahassee, the VIPER training facility known as “The Sticks” provides agents from Nests in the southeastern United States with a secure grounds for learning advanced agent skill sets. No initial training occurs here; the Sticks is not a substitute for VIPER Academy.

From the outside, the facility masquerades as a conference and retreat complex. VIPER even closes the training operation down for a couple of months each year so it can genuinely open the campus as a conference center. It recruits respectable businesses and law enforcement groups to hold seminars and retreats there — the VBPD uses it annually for management training — thus diverting suspicion away from the facility's true role.

The Sticks' layout vaguely resembles the Academy's, except for having modern residence halls and a large conference center alongside the woods and lake instead of cabins and campgrounds. VIPER training instructors conduct classes in the conference building, aquatic exercises in the lake, and weapons and combat training in an underground complex of firing ranges, gymnasiums, and “danger rooms.”

VIPER Plot Seeds

Here are some plot seeds for using VIPER in your Vibora Bay campaign:

VIPER War Zone: Monique Fontaine moves ahead with her plans to bring all the local Nests directly under her dominion, only to find it isn't nearly as easy as she assumed it would be. Marcoux grows a backbone and resists her power grab, while Denardi's Red Nest boys sport experimental gear she's never seen before, and the Tubman's Tunnel crew goes guerrilla and strikes back hard from the shadows with covert support from Clark Robinson. The Warehouse may still come out on top, but in the meantime, there's VIPER civil war in the streets of the Queen City. The PCs better take matters in hand before the Council of Thirty sends Dragon Branch in to take care of the matter and things *really* get messy.

Wait, I Needed That!: Warehouse agents hijack a shipment of cutting-edge pharmaceuticals to sell them to the highest bidder on the black market. Unfortunately, the shipment included an extremely rare, time-sensitive serum needed to prevent the death of someone important to the PCs (a fellow PC, a DNPC, a major city official, or the like). The PCs must recover the serum from VIPER's clutches before the snakes sell it, the serum goes bad, or the dying character passes on.

Sunken Treasure: While on an unrelated mission in the bay, a Warehouse Mini-Sub spots the remains of a centuries-old Spanish pirate ship on the ocean floor. After retrieving its treasure, Fontaine's people begin selling it off... some to unscrupulous collectors, some to even more unscrupulous foreign museums, and even some to local businessmen seeking prestigious conversation pieces. Reputable academic institutions beg the PCs to locate and stop the source of these sales before the priceless historical objects all elude proper preservation and study.

Sorceress Fontaine: Fontaine's researches into mysticism and the occult progress beyond mere curiosity and enter the realm of actual application. She begins accompanying agents on missions from time to time, lending magical power to their technology. Besides raising the stakes on encounters with the Warehouse, this boost in her personal power raises the question of who's teaching her — learning this sort of magic on one's own is very difficult, at best. Even Fontaine isn't ambitious enough to risk infuriating VIPER by partnering with DEMON... is she?

The Red Menace: A huge spike in missing child cases in Easton has VBPD detectives puzzled and frantic. Learning that Red Nest agents have been snatching kids between the ages of ten and thirteen won't be too difficult for the PCs. Stopping the freakish genetic mutations Denardi turns them into is another matter entirely. Can the PCs stave off the creatures long enough to find a way to reverse their condition and return them to their worried parents?

DEMON

There are currently two Demonhames in the Vibora Bay area, and they're extremely different in style and outlook.

The Plantation

The first, known only as the Plantation, is the older and larger of the two. It's located in the swamps near De Funiak Springs, about twenty miles northwest of Vibora Bay, on the site of an old cotton plantation. The plantation was later converted into an orange grove that failed in the 1940s. After that, the property went through a succession of owners. For a while it belonging to a wealthy Pennsylvania businessman named John Webber, who intended to restore the plantation house as a vacation home. Though some work was done

to restore the building in the mid-1950s, Webber never saw the project through and died in 1973. The property was put up for auction, and a local *bokor* named Lambi bought it with the intention of converting it into a *hounfort*.

Lambi was a fairly nasty sort, fond of using his mystical abilities to keep himself in alcohol and women while harassing his enemies with minor curses, but his personal ambition paled in comparison to that of a later arrival to his parish — a mambo who called herself Salt. Lambi was no match for her intelligence, planning, and power, and within a matter of months she had wrested control of his parish from him. Too late, he realized her growing influence was a threat and tried to combat her, but he died after being struck by lightning during a summer squall.

Salt was, of course, a Morbane — one who skillfully combined the lessons she'd mastered as an Initiate in one of the New Orleans Demonhames with the Voodoo she learned from her mother. She took over Lambi's parish in 1984 and gradually set about converting it into a Demonhame, presenting the organization's beliefs and rituals in terms derived from Voodoo that her followers could understand. The Latin of DEMON's traditional rituals in her Demonhame is mixed with French, Creole, and assorted African languages; and the *asson*, or rattle, used in the Plantation's Voodoo-tinged ceremonies contains human bones rather than those of snakes and other animals. The Plantation has grown in power since Salt founded it, and is now one of DEMON's most feared and effective Demonhames.

Layout And Personnel

The Plantation consists of the main house, plus several outlying buildings on the main property that house Salt and her most loyal followers. The main house remains partially in ruins and appears abandoned from the outside, but has several complete, secure rooms in the basement; the outlying buildings are obviously younger and in much better repair. The hame's Chapel, Summoning Chamber, and Workroom are all located in the main house, each decorated in a perversion of the *hounfort*. For example, the Chapel is decorated like a peristyle with a large central marble altar.

The Demonhame has about fifty Brothers and eight Initiates. Most of them believe Salt is their direct connection to powerful Petro (or "dark") loas that exist beyond the ones known to most practitioners, who are even more powerful and distant than the Gran Maitre, the Voodoo equivalent of the Christian God. Among the most notable Initiates are Jude Clervaux, the primary ceremonial drummer at the Plantation, who apart from his powers as an Initiate also knows several spells that allow him to use his drums to control minds or bodies; Franz, who acts as the *reine silence* (the person who keeps order during a Voodoo service) and has low-level superhuman strength (STR 30); and Hilda Charles, an herbalist of considerable skill (sales of her concoctions to the various shops around Vibora Bay are actually the Plantation's most profitable venture, even though there's nothing criminal about it).

Salt

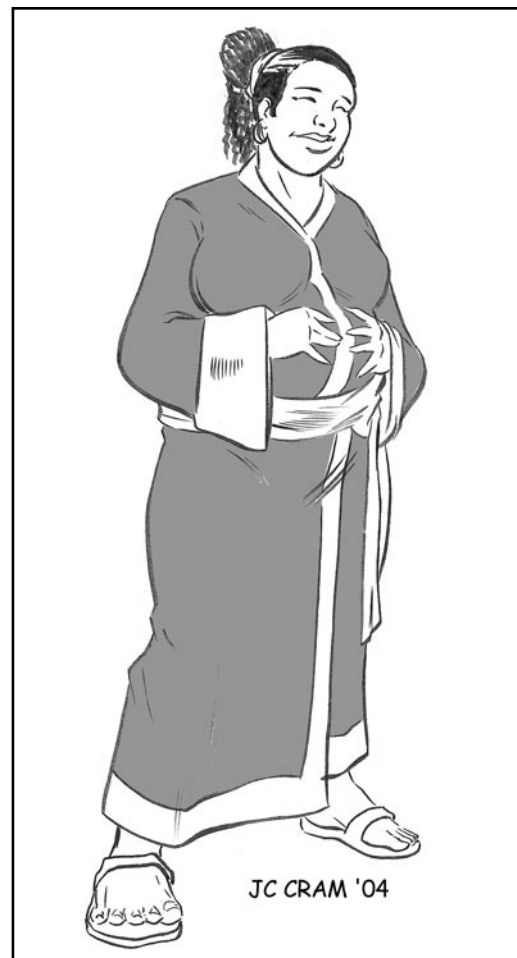
Salt is a particularly cautious, subtle, and scheming Morbane who keeps her own counsel and has hidden her activities from the authorities and mystical do-gooders for twenty years. She's clever and manipulative, balancing her most powerful followers against each other in competition for her favor so they're too busy to challenge her directly.

Unbeknownst to almost everyone, Salt is Haitian. She was recruited into DEMON during one of its failed efforts to establish itself in that country. Several of the powerful *bokors* there uncovered her allegiances and banished her from the country with powerful spells she remains unable to breach more than two decades later. Her fondest desire is to find a way to destroy the bokors responsible and bring her own brand of religion to her homeland, turning it from a bastion of resistance into a DEMON stronghold (with herself at the head, of course). Luther Black knows about her motivation, and is happy to see her try, since he's confident he can retain control of her even if she succeeds.

Salt has crossed paths with Sister Rain on a couple of occasions, and Brother Thunder once. Neither know her connections to DEMON, though both are quite convinced of her evil and consider her followers a dangerous cult. Salt would like to corrupt Brother Thunder to her side if the opportunity arose — she thinks he's quite handsome, and admires the skill with which he creates protective charms. However, if he continues to interfere with her zombie-making, she'll destroy him. Salt despises

SPEAKING IN TONGUES

The information in this section draws heavily from *DEMON: Servants of Darkness*. That book more fully defines many terms used here, such as the organization and history of the group, leader personality types, and commonly-used terms. If you're planning to use DEMON extensively in your campaign, you should strongly consider getting *DEMON*, but in most cases, references here should be sufficiently self-explanatory that you can "wing it" without that sourcebook.



PAGE 90 — ARGENT

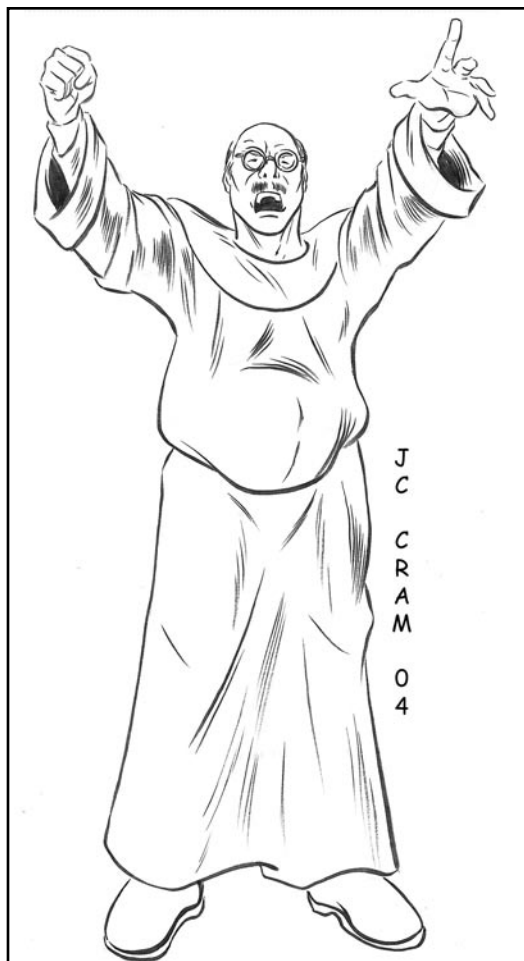
The main text is spot-on about ARGENT. It doesn't have any formal facilities here, though it does own a controlling interest in several small Viboran businesses through various shell companies. Its level of activity in the Queen City is minor, at best.

Sister Rain outright, and only her fear of the loas Rain serves keeps her from mounting a direct campaign against her.

Salt is a Diviner with a minor specialty in Necromancy. Her necromantic spells that concern creating and controlling zombies are as powerful as those of a Morbane who specializes in that discipline. Physically she's somewhat weaker than a typical Morbane, though she's considerably stronger and faster than she appears, which is as a slightly overweight black woman in her mid-40s. (She's actually nearly eighty.)

Whitman's Warehouse

The other Demonhame in the area occupies an apparently-abandoned warehouse in Walton Bayview, which DEMON owns through several corporate fronts. It has no particular name, and is run by a Morbane named George Whitman, the head of a small but fairly profitable computer hardware firm whose main offices are in Inner Easton. The company was actually founded by George's father, but he inherited it as well as a fairly sizable amount of money upon his father's death in 1994. George, who had been an Initiate in a Demonhame in Dallas, "arranged" for his hated father's death, and when he survived his encounter with the Black Shepherd chose Vibora Bay as the location for his new demesne.



He soon teamed with Michael Shattuck to found the New Dawn Church, a cover organization through which they recruit new members. Shattuck, a former Anglican priest, is a dyed-in-the-wool Satanist, apparently having lost his faith in a single night some years ago when he encountered a demon (an incident he no longer speaks of). Whatever occurred that night, it drove Shattuck completely insane, though it left him with excellent speaking skills and remarkable persuasiveness. Whitman uses him as the Church's spokesman and lets him lead meaningless rituals while personally selecting potential Brothers from those who attend the NDC's services. The Church holds its services in a small storefront in Far Easton; nothing there ties it to DEMON in any way.

Layout And Personnel

Whitman's Warehouse (as the Demonhame is known among DEMON's higher-ups) remains small. It includes about twenty Brothers and three other Initiates besides his wife and Shattuck. Audrey Whitman, a lovely woman in her mid-40s, is a homemaker who also runs a cosmetics sales business, through which she has recruited several new members to the Church. She occasionally sells charms and philters to her customers directly, claiming they'll either win back a straying husband, or attract a better one. (Of course, the charms work... but with a more sinister twist.)

Most of Whitman's criminal projects have centered on the acquisition of artifacts and the expansion of his cult, but recently he's worked on developing a collection of spells centered around technological magic. Among other things, he wants to use spells or enchanted hardware to infiltrate the computer systems of banks, large businesses, and even government agencies. With easy access to that kind of information, DEMON could become even more of a temporal threat, and Whitman feels that's the kind of splash he needs to get the respect he deserves. A recently-successful experiment gave him access to some of VTransit's computers, and he now suspects its (and Fontaine's) connection to VIPER.

George Whitman

As Morbanes go, George is surprisingly normal and sane in appearance. He has a wife, Audrey, who's an Initiate herself, and two young daughters (Emma, age five, and Brianna, age two). He hides his natural cruelty and depravity well in public; none of his employees who aren't members of DEMON have any idea what he does away from the office, though in general they find him a demanding boss. Though he puts up a good front, George is in fact both sadistic and paranoid. He believes firmly in the Kings of Edom and is terrified by them. He worships them because they're too big and terrible not to be worshipped, and when they're freed he hopes his service will at least mitigate for him the unimaginable horror everybody else will suffer.

George Whitman is a Thaumaturge, with a minor specialty in City Magic. Because of his minor specialty, George is aware of the hints of intelligence in the city itself and the surround-

ing area, particularly the San Sebastien Swamp (see page 111). Of course, these intelligences' age and power only terrify him further and add to his general state of paranoia. He's found that his City Magic spells are more unpredictable in effect within the city limits (in game terms, increase the standard Required Skill Roll penalty by -1). He tends to use them only when desperate, much preferring his more-reliable Thaumaturgy spells. He'd love to seize control of either the swamp or the less easily-defined "spirit" of the city and break them to his will, if any opportunity arose.

CHAPTER FIVE

PAGE 92 — THE MAHOGANY CLUB

The Club is a gathering spot for many of Vibora Bay's most powerful movers and shakers, where many behind the scenes business deals occur, and therefore cries out for infiltration by any number of agencies. However, since membership is by invitation only and all employees are *extensively* vetted, getting inside is trickier than one might think.

The Club's reputation as a bastion of male chauvinism and misogyny has been grossly exaggerated by the media and feminist activists. It's true that most members are strongly conservative, but to suggest that they regret giving women the vote or think of working class folk as serfs is ludicrous. The average member just wants a comfortable club where he can relax and interact with other men without having women around... the same way many women want all-female exercise clubs.

Here are two plot seeds for the Club:

Whaddya Mean No Girls Allowed???: After learning of The Mahogany Club's tacit "male only" nature, a supervillainess decides to hassle them, make them pay for their insolence, and maybe even pocket some easy money. Depending on the nature of the villainess, she might be tempted to control them (Esper, perhaps), destroy them (Gravitar, if the PCs are up to that challenge), or toy with them (Cateran and Lady Blue leap to mind).

Scandal!: After discovering that managing director Andre Lafler was embezzling from the Club, the membership demanded his resignation. Big mistake. It turned out Lafler gathered dirt on the members for years through judicious eavesdropping, background checks conducted on applicants, and electronic recording devices hidden in the private sitting rooms. Facing removal from his post, Lafler threatens to make their secrets public unless appeased. Suddenly, hired killers — some of them superhuman — aim to cut Lafler down. The PCs have to hold off the assassins and learn who hired them... not an easy task, since members of The Mahogany Club all have the means, and at least a few of them must have the motive, to eliminate Lafler (not to mention the resources to defend themselves vigorously both in court and in the arena of public opinion).



PAGE 93 — STERLING MANOR

None of the popular explanations for Malcolm Sterling and his manor are exactly correct, though the “murdered criminal” theory comes closest. Before coming to Vibora Bay, Sterling lived as a cutpurse in New York City. While burglarizing the home of a wealthy New Yorker, he found the elderly homeowner dead, slumped over a multicolored orb in a roomful of money. Malcolm stuffed the orb and the money in a sack and fled. It wasn’t until weeks later that he finally examined the thing.

As he peered into the sphere, his mind opened wide, and a wordless presence sensed that Malcolm’s greatest desire was to be a man of substance; an honest builder and craftsman rather than a lowly pickpocket. Suddenly, Malcolm’s mind filled with knowledge... knowledge of architecture, engineering, carpentry, masonry, and scores of other trades. After regaining his senses, he took his orb and his money south to Vibora Bay, where he would build the perfect mansion to exhibit his skill and protect his precious orb.

Over the years, the orb poured knowledge into Malcolm whenever he used it, until at last he could neither understand what he was learning, nor bring himself to stop consulting the orb. Madness overtook him. His insanity grew until he could no longer recall how to access the hiding place he’d built for the orb. Malcolm spent his remaining days wandering his estate, trying desperately to find the orb that overpowered his mind, until he finally died of exposure on the grounds outside his home.

Five years ago, Kimberly Galloway discovered the orb. Since she desired success as a hostess above all, the orb bestowed that knowledge upon her. It’s the orb’s influence, more than societal word of mouth, that fueled the success of her business over all rivals. Luckily for Kimberly, her work requires a lot of public contact, so she can’t spend countless hours engrossed in the orb. Therefore, she resists its lure more successfully than Malcolm Sterling did. Given enough time, however, the orb will ultimately take her sanity as well, leaving itself to be found by the next person who should be very careful indeed what he wishes for.

Plot Seed: Wedding Bells! The PCs are invited to a wedding at the prestigious Sterling Manor (or perhaps a PC ties the knot at the estate). During the reception, Kimberly Galloway argues with a chef over making a special dish that no one recalls ever encountering. She seems rather wild-eyed and frustrated that she can’t make the chef understand what she’s driving at. Heroes sensitive to such things realize she’s fraying a bit around the edges, and a faint hint of magic is in the air. Does Sterling Manor hide a secret after all?

PAGE 95 — GABRIEL’S ALLEY

Gabriel is an untrained mystic with an unusually long lifespan (Life Support: Longevity: ages at half the normal rate) and a sort of undefined “feel” for the way things are meant to be in the universe. This manifests itself only as “common sense” rather than some full-blown cosmic awareness, but at your

option a cosmic “wrongness” of sufficient magnitude might allow Gabriel to glimpse actual details instead of just impressions. Gabriel lives in an alley and lends a shoulder to the down-and-out because he senses that’s where he needs to be. Not all of his wisdom springs from his mystic awareness... most of it comes from being a wise old man.

Here are two plot seeds for Gabriel:

Walking A Fine Line: Rodney Graves, a superpowered thug on the lam, takes refuge in Gabriel’s Alley. Sharing his troubles with Gabriel (as anyone wandering into his alley eventually does), Rodney confesses what he’s done. Gabriel wants to alert the PCs to the supervillain threat, but also wants to protect his new friend, who Gabriel is sure will turn over a new leaf. He sends them a message to meet him in his alley to talk it over. Will the PCs believe a street person with no evidence?

A Disturbance In The Force: Gabriel’s friend Brian Hobbs, the local beat cop, discovers Gabriel frozen in a state of wide-eyed shock, with a mystic symbol drawn on the ground beneath him. PCs with the appropriate skills recognize the symbol as protective, and can gradually bring Gabriel around. He experienced some kind of massive mystic shock, but can’t recall what it was. What danger lurks, who drew the protective symbol, and can Gabriel call forth the memory of what he saw?

PAGE 95 — THE SIXTH CHAKRA

Zelia Fromisher works for GMs two different ways. The first is exactly as portrayed in the main description: a moderately-well-read shopkeeper with no extensive knowledge of or contact with the Mystic World.

The second presents Zelia as a much more educated student of arcane lore. Though still powerless, she knows a great deal about occult history and organizations, and therefore realizes how dangerous the subject can be for the unwary. She opened The Sixth Chakra primarily as a channel through which she could divert the curious into harmless pastimes, thus steering them away from matters best not stumbled into by soccer moms. To use Zelia in this manner, increase her INT to 18, her KS: Arcane And Occult Lore to a 16- roll, and change her *Loves Entertaining Her Customers* Psychological Limitation to *Dedicated To Leading Unready Seekers Away From Dangerous Paths*.

Plot Seed: The Purloined Tome?: A PC of mystical bent (or an ally of such bent, for teams without a mystical PC) wanders into The Sixth Chakra for amusement’s sake. While browsing in the loft, he makes a disturbing discovery. Right there, in plain sight on the shelf, sits the infamous *Tomo dell’Orrore Infinito* — the Tome of Infinite Horror. How did this malevolent masterwork get *here*, of all places? Did someone leave it here deliberately, either to rid themselves of it or to ensnare an unwitting customer? Or did someone *hide* it here, hoping to conceal one book of value amongst many without?

PAGE 96 — THE CRABTREE BUILDING

Unbeknownst to most, the privacy of the offices in the Crabtree draws many of the tenants to the building in the first place. The current owners of the building specialize in keeping their noses out of tenant business... as long as the tenants pay their rent on time, of course. What better anonymity in a large city than taking a simple office in a large office building, stenciling an innocuous firm name on the door, indicating that no janitorial or security services are required, placing no listing the Yellow Pages, and paying rent in advance to landlords who turn blind eyes to your affairs? Who would know what *really* goes on behind your frosted glass portal? Viboran professionals walk right past several such offices in the Crabtree Building every day, and none of them ever suspect what's really going on in those businesses... if businesses they truly are.

Janet Garrity fancies herself a mystic, and believes something odd is afoot in the Crabtree Building. She purchased the store to investigate the building "from the inside." She doesn't really have any mystic abilities, but she diligently searches for "weirdness" in the building anyway.

Plot Seed: The Hidden Grimoire: A mystic friendly to the PCs staggers into their usual meeting place. He's mortally wounded, and with his dying breath, gasps that they must find a powerful tome to prevent doom from befalling the city. He says the tome is located in his library on the thirteenth floor of the Crabtree Building. Thirteenth floor? What thirteenth floor?!

The Thirteenth Floor

"Teena's" nickname comes from the fact that "she" is the gateway into the *thirteenth* floor. Unsuspecting tenants and visitors assume the building, like many buildings, lacks a thirteenth floor. They assume wrongly. The thirteenth floor of the Crabtree Building is an extra-dimensional space accessible only via the manual elevator. One must know the exact spot to stop the car to access the floor.

Jeremiah Bynham knows. Originally Jeremiah Wellington, he was one of Elias Crabtree's partners in constructing the building, and he murdered Crabtree days before its completion. Crabtree planned the building to provide a respectable mask for activities of those with mystic bent, with the thirteenth floor as a hiding place for "offices" the unwary needed to be kept out of.

As penance for murdering Elias, Crabtree's mystical friends cursed Jeremiah "Bynham" ("bind-him") to remain in the building for 100 years as the guide and servant of those in need of its oddities (Physical Limitation), and gave him the longevity to accomplish the task (Life Support). He lives on the hidden thirteenth floor. Both the Life Support and the Physical Limitation vanish if and when his curse is removed. His 100 years of servitude are almost over, and he fears being trapped here forever should something destroy the building before his curse ends.

JEREMIAH BYNHAM

8 STR	11 DEX	8 CON
8 BODY	13 INT	18 EGO
18 PRE	8 COM	
2 PD	2 ED	2 SPD
4 REC	16 END	16 STUN

Abilities: Life Support (Longevity; see text); Acting 13-; AK: The Crabtree Building 14-; Conversation 13-; High Society 8-; KS: The Crabtree Building 17-; Lipreading 12-; Mechanics 14-; Only For Repairing "Teena" (-1½); PS: Elevator Operator 14-

25+ Disadvantages: Physical Limitation (see text); Psychological Limitation: Mysterious And Enigmatic

Notes: A fixture at the Crabtree Building for longer than most tenants can remember, Jeremiah Bynham mans the lever in the old manual elevator, "Teena." Neither his appearance nor his manner betray his age. He certainly does *not* look the age he must be to have run Teena as long as reported, but neither does he look young. Although normally pleasant, or even servile to generous tenants of many years acquaintance, he meets attempts to examine him too closely with an icy stare that few can bear to match. Though no one ever accuses Jeremiah of inappropriately discussing his tenants' business, and he seldom speaks of anything other than routine building matters or harmless chit-chat, those who sense such things say there remains a nameless air of knowledge and mystery around Mr. Bynham.

PAGE 98 — THE WHITE HARE HOTEL

Like many of Vibora Bay's more notable and eccentric inhabitants, Aunt Nancy is a bit of a mystic. She also serves as an information broker to various factions and organizations within the city, primarily the High Apostolic Church, of which she's a faithful member. Aunt Nancy could accurately be thought of as the Church's intelligence chief, constantly gathering and recording information gleaned by eavesdropping into conversations between her diverse patrons as well as other, less obvious sources. She's quite good at it, too: if there's a secret in Vibora Bay that more than one person knows about, odds are good Aunt Nancy knows about it as well. If appropriate, you could give her some actual spells and powers, mostly very minor ones centered around information gathering but probably including at least one powerful defense.

Here are three plot seeds for the White Hare:

Plot Seed: Haunted!: Blackjack Israel Jones is back and as dangerous as ever. His ghost has appeared repeatedly at the White Hare in the last few weeks, turning over tables, smashing glassware, and generally terrifying patrons with demands for vengeance. What he's really after, however, is revenge upon Lilac Jenson, the woman who killed him some seventy years before. Since she's no longer alive, her descendants, who might happen to include a PC or notable NPC, will do nicely. The only thing that can return this vengeful spirit to Hell is "spirit ammunition" fired from the .22 revolver displayed in the hotel.

CARLOTA SYLVESTRI

Given the arcane significance of Vibora Bay, it's not surprising that many factions of the Mystic World keep an eye on the city. For the Sylvestri family (described in *Arcane Adversaries*), that "eye" comes mainly in the form of Carlota Sylvestri.

A beautiful, svelte woman with long, curly black hair and an Italian accent most American men find both charming and alluring, Carlota is one of the most popular professors in the Anthropology and Religion departments at UFVB, where she's known by the name of "Antonia Scafidi." Her courses on mythology, ancient cultures, and Christian heresies are fully subscribed every semester. But she's not in Vibora Bay to teach — that's just a cover. Her true purpose is to monitor the mystic goings-on throughout the city and the region and report back to her grandfather Giacomo.

Carlota herself is a mystic of decidedly minor power, with just a few spells pertaining to information-gathering, divination, and personal protection. Her value lies as much in her ability to befriend people and get information out of them (*i.e.*, her well-developed Interaction Skills) as anything. She'll work with anyone she can, even superheroes, to learn what she wants to know. If her cover's ever blown, she'll flee the city and let her grandfather find someone to take her place.

Plot Seed: Special Ingredients: It's time for the annual Vibora Bay chili cookoff! To make her infamous loa gumbo Aunt Nancy needs certain herbal ingredients gathered from a specific portion of the San Sebastien Swamp. Because she has grown so "feeble" in recent years she asks the PCs, regular restaurant patrons, to help her gather them. Unfortunately this "specific portion" of the swamp is the home of the infamous Skunk Ape (page 112), who may not take kindly to humans picking plants in his domain.

Plot Seed: Rumble!: The Outlaws, an infamous Florida motorcycle gang, are enjoying a relatively quiet

lunch of red beans and rice at the White Hare's bar when their archenemies The Road Hogs suddenly walk in. Within moments the entire establishment has turned into a massive three-way brawl between the Outlaws, the Hogs, and the regular patrons. Can the PCs put an end to this unexpected and unwelcome melee before anyone gets seriously hurt?

PAGE 99 — SWEETLAND'S RESTAURANT

Guy Sweetland rents some of the buildings he owns around his restaurant to legitimate businesses with no connections to his assorted illegal activities. Some of his "associates" rent the others.



CIRQUE SINISTER

Membership: Amnesia, Cauldron, Flow, and Minimax. Bobby Holmes occasionally assists the team.

Background/History: The Cirque Sinister is a small group of supercriminals based in an abandoned psychiatric facility called the San Sebastien Sanitarium. The Sanitarium is at the edge of (but not actually in) the San Sebastien Swamp, about ten miles northeast of Vibora Bay.

The Cirque got its start through (for its members) a happy coincidence. In October, 2003, Amnesia, a powerful psionic, met Minimax and Cauldron when each of them tried to rob the same hotel. Hitting it off quickly, they agreed to team up and formed the Cirque Sinister. Around the same time, the Atlanta police were getting a bit too close for comfort, so the group packed up and moved its base of operations to Vibora Bay, settling down in the abandoned San Sebastien Sanitarium psychiatric ward building. Amnesia quickly wound up as the team's leader by acclamation, thanks to Minimax's tiny attention span and Cauldron's laziness; when Flow joined the team he was glad to let her make the decisions.

Group Relations: Amnesia's "control" over the team she nominally leads is tenuous and largely based on anyone else's lack of desire for the job. So far she's done pretty well; the team's had some fun and the headquarters contains lots of entertaining booty. Minimax and Flow find the idea of committing crimes for profit boring and existentially pointless respectively, so now that they have their basic needs attended to both would rather select targets on their artistic merits rather than the prospect of more wealth. Cauldron likes money, but is blinded by his love for Minimax and goes along with whatever she wants. This means Amnesia has to carefully manipulate Minimax into agreeing to whatever crimes she (Amnesia) proposes, a tactic

that may eventually blow up in her face. When he's around, Bobby supports whatever his sister Amnesia wants to do, but nobody else on the team takes the kid seriously... yet.

Tactics: The Cirque alternates between committing crimes for profit, robbing banks and other venues for easily-convertible cash and luxury items for the members' own use, and performing acts of what can only be called "super-vandalism" (to satisfy Minimax's desire to create "performance art" to shake up the masses). Examples of this sort of "pointless" crime have included causing a twenty-foot-high double-bacon cheeseburger (with extra ketchup) to appear in the lobby of City Hall, or "liberating" all of the animals from the Vibora Bay Zoo.

The Cirque's members generally don't care for straight-up battles against superheroes — they prefer sneakiness and surprise. If forced to fight, Cauldron and Flow pick out targets susceptible to their attacks, Minimax creates obstacles and barriers to interfere with heroes and protect herself (and then snipes away with either her powers or weapons from her shrunken arsenal), and Amnesia selectively uses her Entangle to set people up for Flow's punches or Cauldron's fiery breath. Amnesia tries to keep Bobby out of any fights, but that rarely works and soon Bobby's "invisible giant" strides onto the battlefield and starts throwing large objects around. As soon as they have a chance to retreat, they will. If capture seems inevitable, they take their chances on escaping later rather than battle to the last.

Campaign Use: The Cirque Sinister is a pretty offbeat team, suitable for times when your players need a change-up story. Their various internal interactions, especially the relationship between Amnesia and Bobby, may make them vaguely sympathetic to the PCs. If the heroes thwart at least one of their crimes, it's entirely in character for Minimax in particular to become obsessed with them,

luring the heroes into traps and other dangerous situations just to play with them further.

To make the Cirque more powerful, you have two main options. The first is the standard one for a group — add more members. Pick some of the solo villains from this book or *Conquerors*, *Killers*, *And Crooks* to round out their number. Maybe a technological villain, like Armadillo or Mechassassin, would make a good choice. The other method is to alter the existing members' personalities and motivations a little so they work together better as a team. Minimize the conflicts, maximize their desire for profit, and give them all the *Teamwork* Skill. To make them less powerful, do the opposite: increase their differences, making the team far more dysfunctional and unable to coordinate its activities effectively.

The Cirque as a whole has yet to Hunt anyone, though individual members might. As a group they simply don't have enough motivations in common to want to pursue the same enemy with the same zeal.

CIRQUE SINISTER PLOT SEEDS

The Night The Lights Went Out: The Cirque Sinister strikes Vibora Bay Electric's central processing plant, causing a massive blackout across the city. The Cirque and several other criminals take advantage of the resulting chaos for a crime spree. The PCs not only have to thwart these crimes but rescue victims stranded in elevators, trapped in burning buildings, or otherwise threatened by minor disasters.

Powered Up: A cosmically-powerful magical artifact, long hidden in the swamps, falls into the hands of the Cirque. Now that Amnesia and Minimax have power to match their ambitions, they decide to really show the world what they're capable of, twisting reality itself into a nightmarish landscape.

The Curtain Comes Down: Minimax and Flow have decided to go out in a big way. They come up with a suicidal scheme involving an enormous bomb in the middle of downtown, which Minimax insists will be the single greatest performance art piece ever. Amnesia and Cauldron, neither of whom is interested in a stunt so dangerous, try to stop them but fail, and only Amnesia escapes. She turns to the PCs for help — can they prevent the insane pair from pulling off their plan, which will kill Bobby and Cauldron along with themselves and thousands more in the process? And can the heroes really trust Amnesia long enough to find out?

AMNESIA

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
10	STR	0	11-	Lift 100 kg; 2d6 [1]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
15	CON	10	12-	
10	BODY	0	11-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll 12-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
14	COM	2	12-	
5	PD	3		Total: 13 PD (8 rPD)
4	ED	1		Total: 12 ED (8 rED)
5	SPD	22		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
5	REC	0		
30	END	0		
25	STUN	2		Total Characteristics Cost: 90

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost	Powers	END
40	<i>Memory Powers:</i> Endurance Reserve (200 END, 20 REC)	0
90	<i>Memory Loss:</i> Minor Transform 8d6 (person into person missing one particular set of memories, heals back normally or when reminded of what's been lost), Based On EGO Combat Value (Mental Defense applies; +1), Works Against EGO, Not BODY (+¼); All Or Nothing (-½), Limited Target (humans; -½)	18
25	<i>Memory Theft:</i> Telepathy 15d6; Linked (to Memory Loss; -½), Only To "Steal" Memories (-1), Mandatory Effect (EGO +20; -½)	7
50	<i>Crippling Confusion:</i> Entangle 3d6, 4 DEF, Based On EGO Combat Value (Mental Defense applies; +1), Works Versus EGO, not STR (+¼), Takes No Damage From Physical Attacks (+¼); Mental Defense Adds To EGO (-½), Cannot Form Barriers (-¼)	9
10	<i>Mental Agony:</i> Ego Attack 2d6; Extra Time (Full Phase; -½), Increased Endurance Cost (x2 END; -½)	4
11	<i>Handgun:</i> RKA 1½d6; OAF (-1), 2 clips of 8 Charges each (-¼)	[8]
10	<i>Mental Wards:</i> Mental Defense (14 points total)	0
10	<i>Padded Costume:</i> Armor (5 PD/5 ED); OIF (-½)	0
10	<i>Fortune's Favor:</i> Luck 2d6	0

Talents

6	Combat Luck (3 PD/3 ED)
3	Lightsleep

Skills

6	+3 OECV with Memory Loss
3	Breakfall 13-
3	Climbing 13-
3	Concealment 12-
3	AK: Atlanta 12-
3	Lockpicking 13-
3	Stealth 13-
3	Streetwise 12-

AMNESIA PLOT SEEDS

Amnesia wakes up one morning in a hotel room in Vibora Bay, unable to remember anything. She stumbles out into the street, where a PC rescues her before she's run over by a car. The heroes, now burdened with this mystery, have to figure out what's going on — and what caused her amnesia — before she remembers and attacks them.

While amusing herself by stealing memories from people walking around in the Easton Tangle, Amnesia happens to steal some top-secret defense information from a CIA agent on vacation. Now "the Company" wants the PCs to apprehend her as soon as possible... but it won't say why, or what it plans to do with her.

One of a PC's enemies frames him so that it looks like he's guilty of killing several children. Outraged by these reports, Amnesia comes after him with vengeance in mind.

- 2 Survival (Urban) 12-
1 WF: Handguns

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 295

Total Cost: 385

200+ Disadvantages

- 5 Enraged: when children are threatened (Uncommon), go 8-, recover 14-
15 Hunted: FBI 8- (As Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)
15 Hunted: Surge 8- (Mo Pow, Capture/Kill)
15 Psychological Limitation: Likes To Create Terror And Chaos (Common, Strong)
15 Psychological Limitation: Merciless Killer Of Child Molesters Or Murderers (Uncommon, Total)
20 Psychological Limitation: Protective Of Her Brother Bobby (Common, Total)
5 Reputation: crazy supervillain, 8-
95 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 385

Background/History: Briana Holmes was born in Allentown, Pennsylvania in 1982. Her family was astonished by her purple eyes and silver-colored hair, but as far as doctors could tell she was otherwise normal and her parents resolved to dye her hair regularly. By the time she reached grade school she was already having difficulties — though she was quite bright, she had trouble paying attention, and was well-known for provoking fights and disrupting class. No one quite understood why, but there was a simple

explanation: from the time Briana was a toddler she could psionically reach into other people's minds and take their memories for herself. It wasn't until she was about six that she realized everybody couldn't do this, an epiphany that only increased her feelings of isolation and superiority. Her anger at finding unflattering memories about herself caused her discipline problems.

By her early teens Briana had become quite adept at using her powers to manipulate others, but she had a breakthrough the first time she caused a mall security guard to forget he saw her and walked away with several hundred dollars in jewelry. At the same time, her home life was becoming increasingly difficult, as she fought with her parents (both of whom had drinking problems) regularly. The only person she could relate to was her younger brother Bobby, who never judged her or thought bad things about her. In 2000 she decided she'd had enough and ran away from home, heading first to Philadelphia, then south down the Atlantic coast, stopping in various cities and towns for a few weeks to commit a few robberies and then move on before anyone could gather enough physical evidence to catch her in spite of her remarkable powers.

It was in Atlanta in the summer of 2002 that she finally hit the big time. Her robberies had become increasingly bold (and profitable) as she gained experience in using her powers to slip past guards, bank tellers, and store managers. While she was in the middle of her biggest heist yet (a downtown bank's basement security depository, the passcode to which the head guard could suddenly no longer remember), she was interrupted by the arrival of Atlanta's leading superhero, Surge. As electricity crackled around him, Surge gave her one chance to surrender. Then he suddenly rubbed his eyes, wondering how he'd gotten into this dark basement. Oh yes, he'd been pursuing a robber! How could he have forgotten? She must have slipped by in his confusion....

Briana's success went directly to her head. She adopted a flashy costume and the name "Amnesia" and began a campaign of harassment against the Atlanta police and Surge in particular, encountering him three more times without being captured. Then she met the other members of what would become Cirque Sinister (see above), and her life changed again.

In early 2004 Amnesia had a strange dream in which she was talking to Bobby again for the first time in years. Bobby told her he was trapped in a strange place and that he needed her to come rescue him. When she awoke, she took the team to Pennsylvania. Though they complained at first, once they learned what Bobby was capable of they agreed to rescue him and let him join the team. Amnesia now has the power she's always wanted, and she's looking around for something worthy to use it on.

Personality/Motivation: Amnesia commits crimes to bolster her own self-esteem. Though she puts up a bold front, she's a mass of insecurity deep inside and desperately needs to feel important and special. Being a feared and famous supervillain satisfies this need extremely well. She enjoys leading the Cirque Sinister, though she winds up giving both Mini-



max and Cauldron a fair amount of leeway for fear they'll quit if she pushes them too hard.

Amnesia enjoys matching wits with the police and superheroes, particularly when she can publicly humiliate them. She likes to create panics and chaos in crowds, though she's a bit squeamish about using violence directly herself against non-combatants. She has no such compunctions about anyone who would try to stop or capture her.

Quote: "Hey, hero! Looks like you forgot something. Maybe this'll jog your memory!"

Powers/Tactics: Amnesia is a psionic with the power to steal her victim's memories for herself telepathically. This can be any sort of memory, from a specific fact or event to something as subtle as the existence of a skill or power (or how to use it). However, you should *not* allow her to use this as the equivalent of a broad-based Drain or the like — it's only a Minor Transform, so its effects on combat should be limited.

The easiest way to handle the potential problems this power poses are the following. First, remember that she can only steal *one particular memory*, and interpret that using your common sense, dramatic sense, and awareness of game balance. She could, for example, make a PC forget that he's got a particular superpower, but not forget all his superpowers. Second, keep in mind that the victim can heal back normally (using his REC), but also heals back instantly if he's somehow reminded of what he forgot. This can be as simple as a teammate saying, "Hey, use your Energy Bolt!" (if she's stolen the memory of its existence), or seeing the combination lock whose combination is the memory she stole. Again, use your common sense, dramatic sense, and appreciation for game balance in your campaign to make Amnesia's powers fun, but not overwhelming.

While Memory Loss/Theft makes Amnesia a formidable opponent, it's not much help in a straight-up fight, and she knows it. She's got a couple other powers (her Crippling Confusion and Mental Agony attacks) she can use in a pinch, but they're of relatively little use due to high END costs and other restrictions. She leads from the rear, coming up with plans for her team and mentally sniping from cover whenever possible. She's fond of causing targets to simply forget the last few seconds (her Crippling Confusion) — while they're temporarily stunned and without their bearings, Flow or Cauldron can attack them. As a last resort, she carries a gun and isn't afraid to use it.

Campaign Use: See the introductory text for general information. Amnesia's probably the most solid and stable member of the Cirque, and thus the most dangerous over time. Play her as someone who's street-smart and cagey, but not quite as experienced in the use of her (somewhat limited) powers as most supervillain team leaders.

To make Amnesia more powerful, convert her Memory Loss into a Major Transform and redefine it so she can remove/add Psychological Limitations and make other significant mental changes to her targets. To weaken her, get rid of Crippling Confusion and Mental Agony.

Amnesia often Hunts child molesters, abusers, and killers, whom she loathes. Other than that, she's really not interested in pursuing an enemy; she'd rather maintain her distance and keep committing crimes.

Appearance: Briana is a lovely young woman, with striking, long silver hair, a curvy figure, and distinctive purple irises in her eyes. She's only 5'0" tall and weighs about 110 pounds. She wears a purple and black jumpsuit that matches her eyes, with a short black jacket over it and half-mask that covers her face but not her hair.

CAULDRON

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
28	STR	18	15-	Lift 1,200 kg; 5½d6 [3]
18	DEX	24	13-	OCV: 6/DCV: 6
25	CON	30	14-	
15	BODY	10	12-	
11	INT	1	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3 d6
6	COM	-2	10-	
12	PD	6		Total: 22 PD (10 rPD)
10	ED	5		Total: 22 ED (12 rED)
5	SPD	22		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
11	REC	0		
50	END	0		
42	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 119

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost	Powers	END
17	<i>Internal Combustion:</i> HKA 2d6, Armor Piercing (+½), Penetrating (+½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); Only Works Against Swallowed Items (items must be less than ½" in any dimension; -2), No STR Bonus (-½), Gestures (must swallow; -¼), No Knockback (-¼)	3
18	<i>Fire-Breathing:</i> Elemental Control, 36-point powers	
27	1) <i>Spit Fire:</i> RKA 2d6, Explosion (+½), Personal Immunity (+¼); Limited Range (10"; -¼)	5
22	2) <i>Smoke Breath I:</i> Energy Blast 3d6, No Normal Defense (defense is Life Support [Self-Contained Breathing]; +1), Area Of Effect (3" Radius; +1); Does Not Work In High Winds or Rain (-¼)	4
14	3) <i>Smoke Breath II:</i> Change Environment 32" radius, -4 to Normal Sight PER Rolls; Does Not Work In High Winds or Rain (-¼)	4
7	<i>Jaw Strength:</i> +20 STR; Only For Keeping His Jaws Clamped On Something (-1½), No Figured Characteristics (-½)	2
33	<i>Tough Form:</i> Armor (10 PD/12 ED)	0
40	<i>Fire Immunity:</i> Energy Damage Reduction, Resistant, 75%; Only Works Against Limited Type Of Attack (fire; -½)	0
15	<i>Strange Physiology:</i> Life Support (Diminished Eating: only has to eat once per week; Immunity: all terrestrial poisons and chemical warfare agents; Safe Environ-	

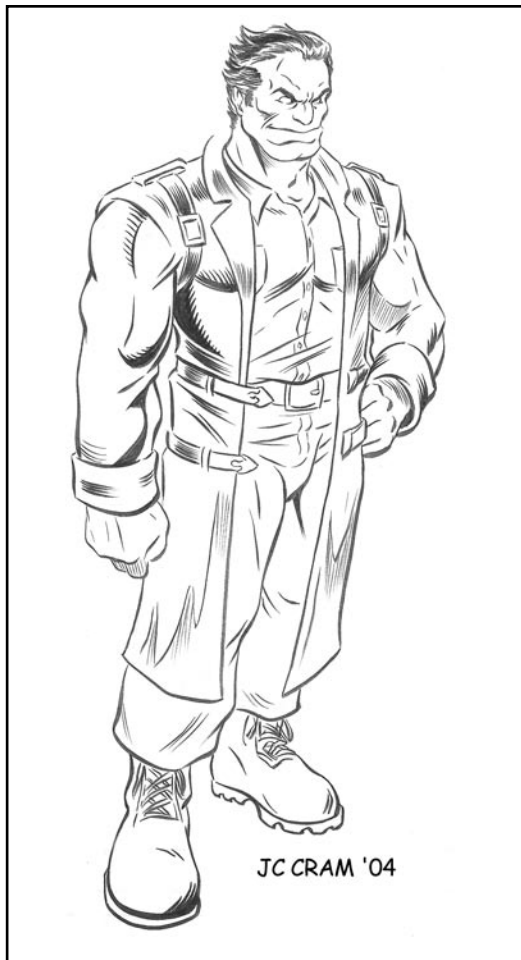
- ments: Intense Cold, Intense Heat) 0
 12 *Fiery Eyes*: Sight Group Flash Defense (12 points) 0

Skills

- 6 +2 with Fire-Breathing powers
 2 AK: Italy 11-
 2 CK: Vibora Bay 11-
 2 KS: Plumbing 11-
 2 PS: Plumber 11-
 2 Language: English (fluent conversation; Italian is Native)
 4 Gambling (Card Games, Sports Betting) 11-
 3 Stealth 13-
 3 Streetwise 12-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 231**Total Cost: 350****200+ Disadvantages**

- 20 Hunted: Guy Sweetland 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)
 10 Hunted: Black Mask 8- (As Pow, Capture/Kill)
 15 Physical Limitation: Power Is Difficult to Control — Accidentally Destroys Things (Frequently, Greatly Impairing)
 15 Psychological Limitation: Anti-Authoritarian; Breaks Laws For Fun (Common, Strong)
 15 Psychological Limitation: Overconfidence (Very Common, Moderate)
 10 Psychological Limitation: Vengeful; Holds Grudges (Uncommon, Strong)



- 10 Reputation: hideous European villain/freak, 8- (Extreme)
 15 Social Limitation: Secret Identity (Adriano Bompani) (Frequently, Major)
 15 Susceptibility: takes 3d6 damage instantly if he ingests fire suppressants (such as fire-retarding chemicals, large amounts of water, and the like) (Uncommon)
 25 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 350

Background/History: Adriano Bompani was born in Salerno, Italy in 1972. As an adult he worked as a plumber and occasionally took odd jobs for local gangsters as a low-level thug and debt collector. A scientist working for the local VIPER Nest recruited him in 1999 as a test subject for a experimental “super-soldier” drug, supposedly reverse-engineered from blood samples stolen from UNTIL’s own program. Adriano experienced what appeared to be an allergic reaction to the serum and died on the operating table. VIPER quietly disposed of his body by dumping it in the Via Del Greci.

Bompani’s “allergic reaction” and apparent death were only temporary manifestations of a mutation on the cellular level. His body washed ashore on a deserted beach several days later, where he regained consciousness. Bompani discovered that his body had physically changed — his mouth was now considerably larger, and his eyes glowed with an internal fire. More importantly, his upper torso had become like a powerful oven, capable of generating smoke and fire from his mouth, and anything he ingested was consumed by the terrible fires that burned painlessly in his chest. Fearing that if VIPER found him it would subject him to even more awful experiments, he stowed away on a tramp freighter that took him to America.

By the time he arrived in Florida, he had adjusted more to his new appearance and powers and decided to try to make his mark as a supervillain for hire. He called himself Cauldron, and after demonstrating his abilities for Guy Sweetland he was hired as freelance muscle. It was while working for Sweetland that he encountered Black Mask, who defeated him in combat a couple of times but never apprehended him.

In 2001 he met Minimax while she was on one of her sprees of vandalism, and was instantly smitten. Minimax was intrigued by his powers and found him entertaining to hang around with, so Cauldron abruptly quit his job with Sweetland to work as her partner, leading to some bad blood between himself and the mobster. The two shifted their activities north, committing crimes in Atlanta and other parts of Georgia and Alabama. When Minimax joined the Cirque Sinister, he did, too, and it was his suggestion that the team move back to Vibora Bay when things got hot in Atlanta.

Personality/Motivation: Cauldron, despite his fearsome appearance and bizarre powers, is actually a fairly ordinary guy who would like nothing more than to make some money without having

to work too hard. He's deeply in love with Minimax, who occasionally returns his attentions but more frequently ignores him or even teases him unmercifully about his looks and powers. He's torn between wanting to commit more crimes with his powers to impress her and finding some way to reverse the effects of the serum so he'll look normal enough that she'll find him attractive. (Of course, Minimax would have no use for Cauldron as a normal person, but Bompani deludes himself otherwise.) He dislikes authority intensely (and often takes this dislike out on cops and politicians who get in his way), but follows orders from either Minimax or Amnesia (the former more readily than the latter)... for the time being. He enjoys terrorizing normals with bursts of fire from his mouth. He also likes the thrill of superhuman combat, and taunts and harasses heroes when he's not trying to kill them.

Quote: "Ain't fireproof, are ya? Then back off!"

Powers/Tactics: The VIPER serum converted Cauldron's body into a humanoid oven that constantly "burns" inside him with astonishingly hot flames. Cauldron can consume just about any flammable object he can fit into his mouth, which can open almost three feet wide — his neck bulges like a pelican's when he swallows something particularly large until his internal fires reduce it to smoke. His jaws are even more powerful than the rest of his body, and when he grabs hold of someone with them only the strongest superhumans can force him to release his grip. He can also "spit" bursts of flame up to about twenty meters accurately, or belch forth clouds of thick, dark, choking, blinding smoke.

Cauldron's general physiology has been altered to accommodate his bizarre power. He's superhumanly strong and tough, is almost entirely resistant to heat and flame (including fires he doesn't create himself), and no longer needs to "eat" normally (he just has to consume one flammable item of reasonable size per week).

In combat Cauldron prefers to open by grabbing something unlikely (like a gun or other Focus if possible) so he can eat it while smiling and making a Presence Attack. If that doesn't intimidate his foe into surrendering right there, he follows up by spitting fire or a cloud of smoke.

Campaign Use: See the introductory text for general information. Cauldron is part of the Cirque's "muscle" — he's mainly intended for combat, and takes a frontline position in battles. In the long term, he might cause rifts within the group through his slavish devotion to Minimax or his general dislike of taking orders.



To make Cauldron more powerful, expand the scope of his fire-breathing powers. Switch his Elemental Control to "Smoke Generation" and then give him a Multipower of various fire attacks. An HKA "Enormous Bite" might also be worth adding. To weaken him, reduce his Characteristics and change his Spit Fire to an Area Of Effect (One Hex).

Cauldron is a vengeful streak and is likely to start Hunting a hero who defeats him once too often or humiliates him in public. He'll attack directly at the first opportunity — he lacks the temperament and intelligence for greater subtlety and planning (though Minimax might help him concoct a better scheme).

Appearance: Cauldron stands about 6'1", with a barrel chest, eyes that glow orange or even red depending on what he's eaten recently, and an enormous mouth that even when closed stretches from ear to ear. When he opens his mouth his jowly cheeks expand and stretch, blowing out to either side of his head. His black hair is moussed to stand on end, and his hairline has receded, leaving most of his forehead bare. He doesn't wear much of a costume, favoring dark jeans and denim "work shirts," usually with a long brown trenchcoat heavy with straps and buckles.

CAULDRON PLOT SEEDS

Teleios decides Cauldron would make excellent fodder for experimentation and kidnaps him. The PCs have to rescue the large-mouthed supervillain before Teleios finds a way to give his cloned soldiers fire-breathing powers.

A string of mysterious fires strikes Weston. The authorities definitely believe it's arson, but can find no trace of accelerants. Is Cauldron moonlighting as an arsonist?

Cauldron eats a mystic hero's Unbreakable Focus — and now it's stuck in his throat! He can't destroy it and he can't vomit it back up. He's going on a pain-fueled rampage, and the Focus is making his powers more destructive than ever. The PCs have to stop him and then solve the problem.

FLOW				
Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
45	STR	35	18-	Lift 12.5 tons; 9d6 [4]
20	DEX	30	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
30	CON	40	15-	
22	BODY	24	13-	
10	INT	0	11-	PER Roll 11-
8	EGO	-4	11-	ECV: 3
20	PRE	10	13-	PRE Attack: 4d6
5	COM	-2	10-	
20	PD	11		Total: 20 PD (20 rPD)
11	ED	5		Total: 11 ED (10 rED)
4	SPD	10		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
15	REC	0		
60	END	0		
60	STUN	0		
Total Characteristics Cost: 159				
Movement: Running: 12"/24"				
Cost	Powers	END		
6	Rubbery Body: Elemental Control, 12-point powers			
6	1) Oversized Fists: HA +3d6; Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½)			1
14	2) Malleable Form: Desolidification (affected by any type of attack); Does Not Protect Against Damage (-1), Cannot Pass Through Solid Objects (or spaces smaller than 10 cm; -½)			4
9	3) Rubbery Body: Stretching 3"			1
6	4) Long Legs: Running +6" (12" total)			1
37	5) Stuck On Me: Entangle 3d6, 3 DEF,			



	Continuous (+1), Damage Shield (+½), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½); Feedback (character takes all damage to break victim out of Entangle; -1), Cannot Form Barriers (-¼)	9
19	6) Bounceback: Missile Deflection and Reflection (all physical projectiles); Costs Endurance (-½)	3
30	Tough To Hurt: Physical Damage Reduction, Resistant, 50%	0
15	Durable: Damage Resistance (20 PD/10 ED)	0
23	Inhuman Physiology: Life Support (Immunity: all terrestrial diseases, biowarfare agents, poisons, and chemical warfare agents; Safe Environments: High Pressure, Low Pressure/Vacuum)	0

Skills	
15	+3 with HTH Combat
9	+3 with Breakfall, Climbing, and Contortionist
3	Breakfall 13-
3	Climbing 13-
3	Contortionist 13-
2	CK: Little Rock, Arkansas 11-
5	SS: Geology 14-
1	Streetwise 8-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 206
Total Cost: 365

200+ Disadvantages	
5	Physical Limitation: Inconvenient Size (8'0", weighs 500 pounds) (Infrequently, Slightly Impairing)
10	Physical Limitation: Poor Distance Vision (suffers double the Range Modifier) (Infrequently, Greatly Impairing)
15	Psychological Limitation: Short-Tempered (Common, Strong)
15	Psychological Limitation: Hates Bullies (Common, Strong)
10	Psychological Limitation: Wants to Know Where He Came From (Uncommon, Strong)
5	Rivalry: Professional, with any other "brick"
15	Susceptibility: suffers a Drain DEX 2d6 every Turn when exposed to intense cold (including ambient temperatures below -7° C [20° F]) (Uncommon)
5	Unluck: 1d6
85	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 365

Background/History: In the fall of 2002, a small team of geologists was exploring an Arkansas pine forest after local residents reported a small meteor shower in the area. After more than two days of fruitless searching, Kurt McColl, one of the grad students involved, finally came across a charred black rock sitting at the bottom of a small crater. When he climbed down for a closer look, the rock split in two with a snap that sounded like a gunshot. From the hollow center a purple, gooey liquid flowed onto the needle-covered dirt.

As the young geologist looked on in amazement, the puddle of purple goo began to stir and

bubble, and then to shift and grow. Before his eyes the liquid bubbled up into a column some eight feet high, then slowly coalesced into a vaguely humanoid shape. McColl finally regained his composure and turned to call for his compatriots to come see this amazing find, but when he turned back the large purple being reached out and touched his forehead. When the other geologists finally found McColl he was lying unconscious in the crater next to the broken meteor, in a coma he would never recover from.

That's where Flow's awareness began — when he was racing through the forest at night with the memories of a human male named Kurt implanted in his head. When he finally stopped running, he was near Little Rock, where he smashed up a restaurant and a liquor store, then took on some state troopers and finally ran away before PRIMUS agents could make the scene. He fell in with a gang of bikers outside Memphis for a little while, but eventually got angry at some of them and smashed up the barn they were living in. He set out on the road again and wound up in Vibora Bay, where Amnesia tracked him down and invited him to join her team. Lacking any other place to go and wanting to fit in somewhere, Flow accepted the offer and has worked with the Cirque Sinister ever since.

Personality/Motivation: Flow is completely in the dark about his own origins. He has no idea where he comes from or why he's on this planet, though he assumes he's an alien of some sort, perhaps sent as a probe to study life on Earth. He has all of McColl's memories in his head, but apparently only for informational purposes — he has no emotional context or reaction to any of the people or events of McColl's life, but he knows everything McColl did. His lack of understanding and general sense of purposelessness has made him short-tempered and bitter, liable to lash out at anyone who crosses him (particularly anyone who bullies him or someone else in his presence — he has a visceral dislike of bullies that he doesn't really understand). The absurdity of his situation (as gleefully pointed out by Minimax) makes him an ideal “artist” for the Cirque as he takes out his frustrations on a meaningless universe. Flow only vaguely understands what she's talking about, but is so glad to have a “home” that he doesn't really mind her chatter.

Quote: “Don't you get it? Nothing matters. It's all meaningless crap. Might as well break stuff — least it shows we're alive.”

Powers/Tactics: Flow's body can vary in solidity from rock hard to nearly liquid in consistency, and can stretch and change his shape (though not his mass or actual appearance). He can squeeze his body long and thin enough to pass through a narrow pipe or opening, or shift much of his mass into his arms or fists so they become larger and heavier before he delivers a powerful punch. He can Reflect physical Ranged attacks by causing his body to become resiliently rubbery, or trap someone who touches him in excess folds of waxy flesh by relaxing his physical consistency.

Flow doesn't have much use for tactics. He fights when he's angry or frightened, or when Amnesia or Minimax tell him to, but otherwise he's difficult to actually rouse to anger. But thanks to his dislike of bullies, he won't allow an obviously weak person (like a child or animal) to be hurt in his presence if he can help it.

Campaign Use: See the introductory text for general information. Like Cauldron, Flow is muscle for the group — he goes where he's told and fights whomever he's told to fight. The mystery of his background provide a plot hook you can exploit.

To make Flow tougher, give him some other Body-Affecting Powers, such as Density Increase, Growth, or Shape Shift. You can also increase his inches of Stretching, or improve his SPD to 5. To weaken him, reduce his Characteristics (particularly STR and CON).

Flow doesn't Hunt anyone unless Amnesia or Minimax tell him to. Even then, all he'll do is track down his opponent and attack as soon as possible.

Appearance: Flow is an eight-foot-tall, hyper-muscled giant who seems to have been carved from purple rubber or wax. His eyes are large and yellow, and his features appear a little vague and unfinished. He's completely hairless, and has a bit of an underbite. His “costume” is a pair of baggy black pants and a black vest over his bare chest.

FLOW PLOT SEEDS

Flow is actually a probe sent by the Hzeel to scout Earth prior to their invasion, but his programming's been scrambled. When he starts receiving “corrective” broadcasts and instructions, what will he do? And what if the Warlord intercepts the transmissions and decides to acquire more “Blueboy” technology?

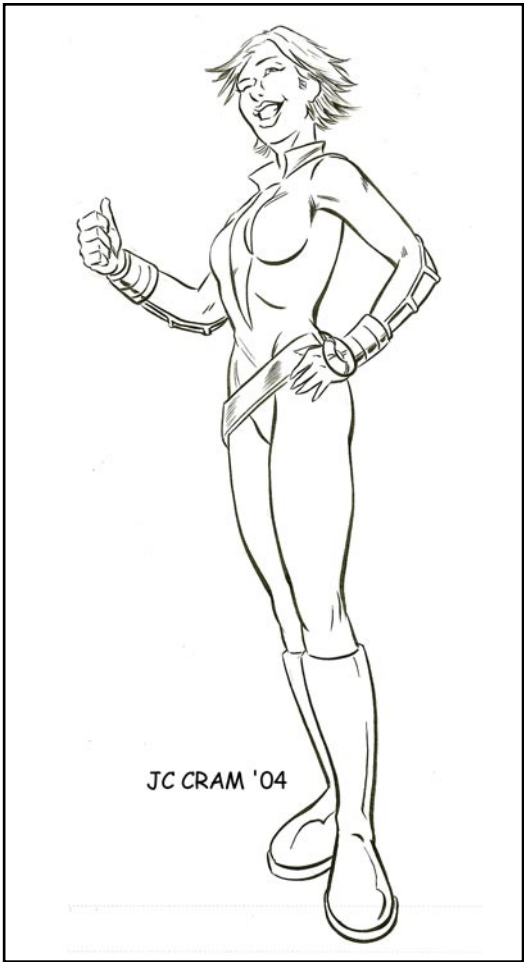
Flow is actually a construct of Teleios's that fell to Earth from one of his orbital laboratories. Teleios finally tracks him down and sends an army of intelligent monsters (dinosaur-men, mostly) to “retrieve” him.

Flow is actually a peaceful alien explorer suffering from amnesia brought about by his crash-landing on Earth. He regains his memories one day. Ashamed of what he's been doing, he contacts the PCs and offers to serve as their “double agent” to help bring down the Cirque Sinister. Will they go for it... and is the offer on the up-and-up?

MINIMAX				
Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
8	STR	-2	11-	Lift 75 kg; 1½d6 [1]
25	DEX	45	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
16	CON	12	12-	
9	BODY	-2	11-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll 12-
18	EGO	16	13-	ECV: 6
14	PRE	4	12-	PRE Attack: 2½d6
14	COM	2	12-	
6	PD	4		Total: 20 PD (14 rPD)
5	ED	2		Total: 19 ED (14 rED)
5	SPD	15		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
5	REC	0		
32	END	0		
21	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 101

Movement: Running: 6"/12"

Cost	Powers	END
31	<i>Object Size Manipulation:</i> Elemental Control, 62-point powers	
104	1) <i>Enlarge Or Reduce Inorganic Objects:</i> Major Transform 6d6 (non-living object into same object but different size, heals back normally (4 BODY/day) or through another application of this power), Improved Results Group (+¼), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	5
15	2) <i>Enlarged Object Barriers:</i> Entangle 6d6, up to 6 DEF, Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); OIF (small objects of	



	opportunity; -½), Only To Form Barriers (-1), Defense Depends On Materials Used (-½)	3
12	3) <i>Dropped Through A Hole:</i> Teleportation 5", x8 Increased Mass, Area Of Effect Nonselective (One Hex; +¼), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼), Usable As Attack (defense is Teleportation, Growth, or dimension-manipulating powers; +1); Only To Drop Victim Through Something He's Standing On That Has Holes In It (-1), Must Pass Through Intervening Space (-¼), No Noncombat Movement (-¼)	3
109	4) <i>What Happened To Your Sword?:</i> Drain Focus 4d6, all powers defined as belonging to a single Focus at once (see text; +1), Delayed Return Rate (points return at the rate of 5 per 20 Minutes; +¾), Ranged (+½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼)	6
27	5) <i>Tossed Pebbles Into Boulders:</i> Energy Blast 9d6, Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½), Reduced Endurance (½ END; +¼); OIF (small item of opportunity; -½), Limited Range (25"; -¼)	3
60	<i>Shrunkn Arsenal Pool:</i> Variable Power Pool, 50 base + 25 control cost; all slots OAF (-1), Only For Mundane Devices (see text; -½)	var
16	<i>Padded Costume:</i> Armor (8 PD/8 ED); OIF (-½)	0
10	<i>Luck Of The Mad:</i> Luck 2d6	0

Talents

12	Combat Luck (6 PD/6 ED)
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Skills

9	+3 with Size Manipulation EC
3	Breakfall 14-
3	Concealment 12-
3	Demolitions 12-
3	KS: Modern Performance Art 12-
7	Power: Size Manipulation Tricks 14-
3	PS: Artist 13-
3	Stealth 14-
3	Streetwise 12-
6	WF: Common Melee Weapons, Small Arms, Flamethrowers, Grenade Launchers

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 439

Total Cost: 540

200+ Disadvantages

20	Enraged: if someone interferes with or damages her "art" (Common), go 11-, recover 11-
5	Hunted: Dr. Mercy 8- (Less Pow, Capture)
20	Hunted: Teleios 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
20	Psychological Limitation: Nihilistic Criminal "Performance Artist" (Very Common, Strong)
20	Psychological Limitation: Casual Killer (Common, Total)
255	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 540

Background/History: Minimax's mother was a teenage runaway who was living on the streets of Dallas when she became pregnant in 1992. Her mother knew she couldn't possibly care for the child, so after giving birth she had the child placed with Foster Services for adoption. But an unscrupulous pediatrician manipulated the paperwork so the infant was sent to the secret laboratory of a criminal madman by the name of Doctor Mercy. There, Mercy performed several experiments on the baby, exposing it to various chemicals and forms of radiation.

Under his "care," Infant A-22 aged at a remarkable rate. Within five years she appeared to be a young adult and had developed the superhuman ability to change the size of non-living objects. Mercy wanted her to lead an army of superhumans he planned to create with his insane science, but before he could acquire the additional babies he needed he was defeated and captured by the superhero Golden Eagle. In the resulting confusion, A-22 slipped out the back of the lab and onto the streets for the first time in her life.

Fortunately, A-22 was a remarkably quick learner and adapted to her strange new environment very quickly. She took the name Minimax, and at first used her powers only for small crimes to keep herself fed and clothed while she wandered across the southern United States. But as the weeks and months wore on, her fragile mental balance began to deteriorate, and her crimes became more random, violent, and pointless. While hanging out in a bus station in Mobile she read a magazine article about an artist who performed various surreal acts in public to illustrate "the absurdity of life." Minimax could certainly relate to that idea, and in her addled state she decided that was also her purpose in life. She was meant to be an artist, and her "art" would be crimes of random vandalization, meaningless murder, and haphazard destruction, so people would come to understand how pointless and strange reality really was.

In 2001 she met Cauldron for the first time, and he fell in love with her. While she doesn't return his affections, she likes his company and enjoys both his bizarre appearance and his propensity for violence. The two traveled together for years until meeting Amnesia in 2003 and settling down in Vibora Bay as a "supervillain team." It was Minimax who named them the Cirque Sinister, and her penchant for the surreal colors many of their exploits.

Personality/Motivation: Minimax is completely insane. She believes wholeheartedly that existence is a futile and pointless exercise that should regularly be livened up with intentionally crazy and violent behavior. She doesn't understand why anybody takes anything seriously, and commits crimes because they appeal to her aesthetically (though she tolerates Amnesia occasionally modifying one of her schemes so the team can make a profit — she doesn't see the point in it, but she doesn't care enough to fuss about it). She's violent, but not passionate. She doesn't care about anything, for good or bad, except her own amusement and her "art." If

someone interferes with her attempts to make "art," or "changes" (repairs, heals, cleans up) her art, she becomes furious.

Quote: "Don't you think the lobby looks more interesting now, what with the truck hanging upside down there? Oh, right, the *vault*. Sorry."

Powers/Tactics: Minimax has the ability to change the size of non-living objects, increasing or decreasing them by factors of up to several hundred. This effect wears off — sometimes almost immediately, sometimes over the course of days or weeks. Her powers don't damage the objects *per se*, though an object might get damaged if forced to grow into an area too small to accommodate it, or the like. The reason her powers don't work on living beings remains unknown — it may be simply a mental block of some sort, though considering her general callousness it seems unlikely.

Minimax uses her powers imaginatively and occasionally even soundly from a tactical point of view. Besides simply changing the size of objects (and thus often making them too small or too large to use), some of the "tricks" she's developed include:

- creating large objects to form barriers for cover, or to foil pursuit
- making an object under someone's feet that has holes — such as a subway grating — grow so large the person falls through (the object returns to its normal size immediately thereafter)
- shrinking all or part of a Focus so that it becomes unusable (in game terms, this is defined using only a +1 *Variable Effect* Advantage, since while she affects all the powers in a single Focus at once, she can't affect all the powers in all the target's Foci simultaneously)
- throwing a small object, then enlarging it in mid-flight so it strikes with a powerful impact

Additionally, Minimax carries an arsenal of weapons and devices that she's pre-shrunk so she can fit them in her pockets without any problem. Her array of useful devices ranges from guns, to flashlights, to spare sets of clothing. The one restriction is that the objects have to be mundane — the sort anyone could buy in a store or make for themselves. (At the GM's option, she can also "create" non-mundane devices she's obtained during her adventures, such as a Focus she steals from a PC.)

One drawback to Minimax's powers is that they tend to be tiring. When running her, keep a close eye on her END usage; if she pulls too many "stunts" during a Turn she may run too low on END.

Since she has little interest in power or wealth, Minimax sometimes becomes a liability in the field — she gets distracted by her efforts to "make art" rather than actually completing the crime. Amnesia and Cauldron have both gotten pretty good at convincing her to stay focused, but it's almost always a struggle. Even when committing "serious" crimes, she's frequently prone to "signing" them with an odd use of her powers, shrinking or magnifying some nearby object to confirm that the Cirque has struck again.

MINIMAX PLOT SEEDS

Doctor Mercy escapes from prison and makes his way to Vibora Bay. While looking for a way to capture Minimax, he sets himself up as an “underworld doctor”... one who just happens to sometimes “alter” or “improve” his patients. The PCs have to deal with an epidemic of low-powered super-crooks and find out what’s going on before Mercy accomplishes his objective.

Minimax wants to create a new form of art that she calls “satellite painting.” This means she wants to wreak destruction in a pattern that forms a picture when viewed by a reconnaissance satellite, from a plane, or the like. She begins destroying buildings around Vibora Bay to create her “master-piece”; the PCs have to figure out what she’s doing so they can find her and stop her.

Minimax claims the San Sebastien Swamp is “talking” to her. The others won’t believe her, but she knows it’s true. It’s making her frantic, so she decides she has to destroy the whole swamp to “shut it up.” She begins collecting volatile chemical and other supplies needed to burn the whole swamp to the ground, forcing the PCs to track her down and stop her before she lights the match. And what will the Skunk Ape do about all this?

Campaign Use: See the introductory text for general information. Minimax has an unusual power set that gives the Cirque some real flexibility in combat, but her attitude and approach to crime may ultimately give you more to work with from a plot perspective. When strange acts of vandalism start to occur, or bodies wind up all over town with enlarged needles through their hearts, the PCs will realize they’re not dealing with a garden-variety supervillain.

Minimax’s creator, Dr. Mercy, wants her back. He still entertains visions of having her lead an army of his bizarre super-soldiers... once he gets out of prison and back to his labs, of course. Even worse for her, the master villain Teleios got wind of Mercy’s experiments and would also like to run her through a few “tests.”

To make Minimax tougher, increase her END and REC (or give her a large Endurance Reserve to fuel her powers). You could also increase the size of her VPP, or give her gadgeteering abilities so she can wield super-tech devices instead of just mundane ones. To weaken her, reduce the Active Points in most of her abilities, and/or get rid of her VPP.

Minimax is an unpleasant Hunter. She starts out by vandalizing her quarry’s possessions, gradually escalating her attacks until she goes after him directly. If possible she’ll make the entire Hunt into one grand piece of “performance art,” with a deadly denouement in a prominent public place before an “appreciative” audience.

Appearance: Minimax is a young blonde woman, about 5’3” and 110 pounds, more cute than beautiful. She wears a black body suit with a white collar, belt, and boots, and a plunging décolletage (though she has a fairly slender figure). She frequently carries a small sack or backpack full of items she has shrunk down.

BOBBY HOLMES

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
8	STR	-2	11-	Lift 75 kg; 1½d6 [1]
13	DEX	9	12-	OCV: 4/DCV: 4
10	CON	0	11-	
9	BODY	-2	11-	
25	INT	15	14-	PER Roll 14-
15	EGO	10	12-	ECV: 5
8	PRE	-2	11-	PRE Attack: 1½d6
10	COM	0	11-	
3	PD	1		Total: 3 PD (0 rPD)
3	ED	1		Total: 3 ED (0 rED)
4	SPD	17		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
4	REC	0		
20	END	0		
18	STUN	0		Total Characteristics Cost: 47

Movement: Running: 6”/12”

Cost	Powers	END
68	<i>Telekinetic “Imaginary Friend”:</i> Multipower, 68-point reserve	
13m	1) <i>“Invisible Giant Hands”:</i> Telekinesis (45 STR)	7
13m	2) <i>“Poltergeist”:</i> Telekinesis (18 STR), Area Of Effect (6” Radius; +1¼), Selective (+¼)	7
14m	3) <i>Protective Giant:</i> Force Wall (14 PD/10 ED; 3” long and 3” tall)	7
3m	4) <i>My Friend Blocks For Me:</i> Missile Deflection (Any Ranged Attack; Costs Endurance (-½))	2
3m	5) <i>Carried On Giant Shoulders:</i> Flight 12”; Must Remain Within 6” Of The Ground (-½)	2
13m	6) <i>Giant Punch:</i> Energy Blast 9d6, Area Of Effect (One Hex; +½)	7
17	<i>Sophisticated Psi-Shields:</i> Mental Defense (20 points total)	0
3	<i>Psychic Bond:</i> Mind Link with Amnesia, Psychic Bond; No Conscious Control (-2)	0

Talents

5	Eidetic Memory
3	Lightning Calculator

Skills

9	+3 with Telekinetic “Imaginary Friend” Multipower
5	+1 DCV
3	Computer Programming 14-
3	Concealment 14-
5	Cramming
1	Cryptography 8-
1	Electronics 8-
1	Inventor 8-
2	KS: Geek Trivia 11-
1	Paramedics 8-
1	Security Systems 8-
3	Stealth 12-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 190

Total Cost: 237

200+ Disadvantages

10	Hunted: Pennsylvania Police and Child Protection Services 8- (As Pow, NCI, Limited
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- Geographical Area, Capture/Kill)
- 20 Hunted: PRIMUS 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Under The Sway Of His Sister (Common, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Starting To Enjoy Being The Bully For A Change (Common, Strong)
- 10 Social Limitation: Young Teen (Frequently, Minor)

Total Disadvantage Points: 270

Background/History: Bobby Holmes was born in 1991, and from his earliest days his only happy memories were of time spent with his sister Brianna. Their parents were distant, frequently drunk, and occasionally abusive, and when the yelling got bad he could always hide out in her room. Even if she couldn't protect him, she at least could comfort him, and he loved her a great deal. Then, when he was ten, Briana ran away, and Bobby was left to bear the brunt of his parents' anger alone. His parents forbade him to even mention her name. Bobby began spending as much time as he could out of the house himself.

His own mutation manifested itself the day before his thirteenth birthday. Bobby was hanging out down by one of the abandoned factories when a gang of older boys began harassing him. Suddenly, an indistinct, enormous form appeared beside Bobby and began tossing the kids around, slamming one into a brick wall so hard that he suffered some serious internal injuries. Bobby, terrified, tried to make the giant stop, but it continued to rage around the neighborhood, smashing buildings and overturning cars. Several policemen attempted to stop the creature, but it crushed their car with its giant fists. Eventually, a team of PRIMUS agents arrived, and while most of the team tried to subdue the creature, one bright agent noticed the small boy crying and screaming in a nearby alleyway. When he grabbed Bobby, the giant turned to attack him. As he dodged out of the way, he yelled for someone to tranquilize the boy. After another agent set off a knockout gas cannister near him, the mysterious, translucent giant faded from view.

The authorities took Bobby to a Philadelphia hospital while several PRIMUS doctors and specialists from L'Institut Thoth were called in. They tried contacting his parents, but his mother was nowhere to be found and his dad was spending the weekend in jail after a fight in a bar. Meanwhile, the bustling doctors and nurses kept attaching wires to his head and taking readings of something. Bobby was terrified, and fervently wished his big sister was there to take care of him. As he drifted off into sleep, he dreamed that he spoke to Briana, and asked her to come find him. Bobby was as startled as anyone else when a team of costumed supervillains, his sister among them, broke into the hospital the next day and spirited him away.

Now Bobby lives in the abandoned asylum at the edge of the swamp with his sister and her bizarre friends. It's a strange life, but exciting — he's traveled around with the team, learning to control

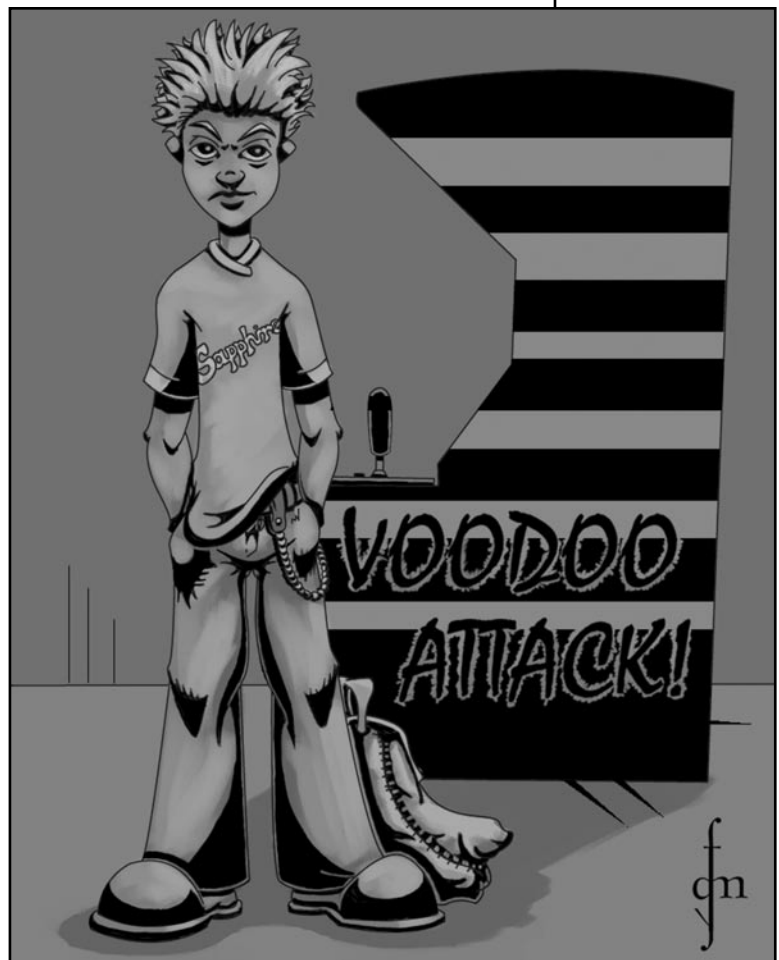
his "friend" (as Briana calls it) and even occasionally helping them with their crazy plans. Bobby didn't exactly plan to become a supervillain, but if that's what it takes to stay with his big sister, well, it beats going home....

Personality/Motivation: Bobby hasn't exactly had much in the way of good role models in his life, and the Cirque's members, despite being violent and crazy, treat him better than most of the adults he's known so far. His sister loves him dearly, and he'll do anything for her approval, including manifesting his "friend" to help rob a bank or blow up a museum. He's not terribly violent, and he's still a bit squeamish about actually using his powers to hurt innocent people, but he's been toughened up enough over the last few months not to include police or anybody trying to capture a teammate as "innocent."

When not committing crimes, Bobby's developing into a remarkably bright young boy. He loves to tinker with gadgets and electronics. He likes cars, sports, computers, and video games, and he's starting to feel a little cooped up in the asylum. He likes Cauldron, is a bit freaked out by Flow (more his whining than his appearance), and is developing a little crush on Minimax that's probably an absolutely terrible idea.

Quote: "You leave my friends alone! Or I'll introduce you to my *other* friend!"

Powers/Tactics: Bobby is a powerful telekinetic still growing into the use of his powers (though



**BOBBY HOLMES
PLOT SEEDS**

Bobby's powers begin to go haywire, and after a few days of this he slips into a coma, leaving his "friend" in existence to wreak destruction throughout Vibora Bay. Desperate to get some help for her brother, Amnesia kidnaps all the neurologists and other doctors she can find. The PCs have to find the missing doctors, and then help Bobby.

Bobby comes to the PCs. He says he wants to turn himself in and help the PCs capture the Cirque before the team completes its latest, highly destructive, scheme. But there's one catch — the heroes have to let his sister go free, and the two of them will leave Vibora Bay forever. Will the PCs go for it?

Bobby develops a crush on a female PC. What will he do to get her attention and earn her affection?

he's remarkably intelligent and learning at a tremendous rate). His power usually manifests as a humanoid grey giant, nearly transparent and without features, varying in size from about ten feet tall to nearly thirty feet (the size is simply a special effect — the giant isn't solid, though its "body" protects Bobby from harm). The giant seems to grab or strike things, but the actual power comes directly from Bobby. Occasionally his telekinesis also manifests as a grey cloud that picks up multiple items and flings them around (the "Poltergeist" slot in his Multipower).

Bobby has no particular sense of tactics yet. He simply does as he's told by Amnesia or any of her teammates... unless what they tell him is "stay out of the way," an instruction his youthful exuberance often leads him to ignore.

Campaign Use: See the introductory text for general information. Bobby is a random element in the Cirque. He's not really a criminal by inclination... yet... but he's sure to become one if treated badly at the hands of cops or heroes often enough. He represents a chance for the PCs to rescue him from a life of crime and maybe even persuade him to one day become a hero himself — assuming they can make him see what a bad influence his sister is.

You shouldn't make Bobby any more powerful for now; he's still growing into his powers. The PCs should encounter him as he is before you begin to broaden the applications of his telekinetic abilities. If you want to weaken him, reduce his Multipower reserve to 50 points and all the slots to 45-50 Active Points each.

Bobby doesn't Hunt heroes. He'll help the Cirque fight its battles, but he's not hardened enough yet to stalk and attack an enemy. He might use his hacking skills to make a hero's life miserable as a sort of prank, though.

Appearance: Bobby is a little small for his age, just under five feet tall and about 100 pounds, with blonde hair and dark eyes. He wears no costume, only jeans and one of a large collection of rock-and-roll band tour shirts.

OTHER VILLAINS

AL

The Alligator Man

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
43	STR	33	18-	Lift 9,600 kg; 8½6 [4]
23	DEX	39	14-	OCV: 8/DCV: 8
30	CON	40	15-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
8	INT	-2	11-	PER Roll 11-
10	EGO	0	11-	ECV: 3
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
4	COM	-3	10-	
14	PD	5		Total: 24 PD (10 rPD)
14	ED	8		Total: 19 ED (5 rED)
5	SPD	17		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
15	REC	0		
60	END	0		
58	STUN	1		Total Characteristics Cost: 173

Movement:

Running: 6"/12"

Swimming: 4"/8"

Cost	Powers	END
30	<i>Bite:</i> HKA 2d6 (4d6 with STR)	3
12	<i>Claws:</i> HKA 1d6 (2d6 with STR); Reduced Penetration (-¼)	1
5	<i>Tail Bash:</i> HA +2d6; Hand-To-Hand Attack (-½), Limited Power (Only With Extra Limb; -½)	1
23	<i>Scaly Skin:</i> Armor (10 PD/5 ED)	0
7	<i>Swift Healing:</i> Healing BODY 1d6, Can Heal Limbs (Regeneration; 1 BODY per 6 Hours), Reduced Endurance (0 END; +½), Persistent (+½); Extra Time (6 Hours;-2½), Self Only (-½)	0
1	<i>Enhanced Lung Capacity:</i> Life Support (Extended Breathing: expends 1 END per Minute)	0
2	<i>Good Swimmer:</i> Swimming +2" (4" total)	1
6	<i>Augmented Senses:</i> +2 PER with all Sense Groups	0
5	<i>See In The Dark:</i> Nightvision	0

Talents

3 Environmental Movement: Aquatic Move-
ment (no penalties in water)

3 Lightsleep

Skills

10 +2 in HTH Combat

4 Animal Handler (Reptiles And Amphibians) 15-

3 Breakfall 14-

3 Climbing 14-

7 Concealment 13-

2 AK: The Everglades 11-

2 AK: San Sebastien Swamp 11-

3 Shadowing 11-

5 Stealth 15-

2 Survival (Swamp/Marsh) 11-

3 Tracking 11-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 141

Total Cost: 314

200+ Disadvantages

- 20 Enraged: when angry or frightened (Common), go 11-, recover 11-
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Both Fascinated By And Terrified of Humans (Common, Strong)
- 10 Psychological Limitation: Lonely; Pathetically Grateful For Any Kindnesses (Uncommon, Strong)
- 15 Psychological Limitation: Assumes The Worst Of Everyone; Reacts To Fear With Anger And Violence (Common, Strong)
- 10 Unluck: 2d6
- 5 Vulnerability: 1½ x BODY from Cold attacks (Uncommon)
- 39 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 314

Background/History: Al's earliest memories are a jumble of fragmentary flashes and sensory impressions. A white room. Strange rhythmic sounds. A man in a white coat, reaching toward him with a sharp thing. Running as fast as he could.

The first thing he distinctly remembers is smashing down a door and fleeing from somewhere out into the warm, humid night. With shouts and barks sounding behind him, he stumbled into a swamp and swam away, delighting in the cool, murky water.

He received his name some weeks later when, scared and hungry but vaguely seeking companionship and help, he wandered into a campsite. He terrified dozens of fisherman and an entire class of junior high schoolers on a field trip, several of whom took pictures of the thing as they fled. The pictures wound up on the front page of tabloids across the state, proclaiming the existence of the "Alligator Man," soon shortened by *Weekly World Inquirer* headline writers to simply "Al."

Al spent several years wandering across Florida, primarily sticking to the depths of the Everglades National Park but occasionally coming close to cities like Miami and Hialeah. In Miami in 2001 he encountered the Demonologist, and that's all he remembers for a long time. The next thing he knew he was in another swamp — not the Everglades, a different one. And somehow this one *spoke* to him, assuring him everything would be all right. He liked it there.

But the swamp was only partly correct. *Usually* things were all right. Usually he could stay in the swamp, where he feels right at home. But sometimes he feels strange urges to get closer to human beings and wanders down into some town, or even into Vibora Bay itself via streams and sewers. Then, inevitably, things go wrong until he can somehow escape the people who hate and fear him and get back to his beloved swamp.

Personality/Motivation: "Al" (who doesn't call himself that name, but has heard enough people refer to him by it to respond to it) has the approximate mental capacity of an eight year-old, despite his horrifying appearance. He still has no memory of his "origin," which frustrates him considerably. He

considers himself ugly and monstrous, but when left to himself he's fairly calm and peaceful. It's only when he encounters other people that he gets upset. He remains fascinated by and obsessed with ordinary human activity, and can't stop himself from periodically wandering closer to civilization and spying on campers, fishermen, or the occasional couple on Lovers' Lane — some instinct drives him toward human contact. This often leads to people becoming frightened, or even attacking him, both of which enrage him. And when Al is enraged, people get hurt. (On the other hand, anyone who shows even the slightest kindness to Al earns his goodwill and affection.)

Al currently lives deep in the San Sebastian Swamp — he's one of the few living beings in the area not part of the collective mind. He finds the swamp particularly calming and appealing, and already considers it his home after only a few months. He'd be particularly upset by any threat to the swamp itself.

Quote: "Ah'ways hay me, scream, run 'way! I give 'em sum'in be scare of!"

Powers/Tactics: Al has superhuman strength, resilience, and recuperative powers, as well as imposing teeth and claws. He's particularly well-adapted for spending time in the water: he swims swiftly; can hold his breath far longer than a human being; and can move through the water with the grace of a fish.



AL PLOT SEEDS

One of the scientists involved in Al's transformation contacts the PCs. Filled with remorse, he wants to help undo the effects, and seeks the PCs' help. He warns them that if they don't capture and cure Al soon, the transformation may continue, making him even more powerful, bestial, and dangerous.

Erwin Stevenson, the infamous "Crocodile Stalker" from Australia, comes to Vibora Bay to film a television show where he stalks and captures Al. This has disaster written all over it, but can the PCs convince the Stevenson (who's basically a nice guy) and his producers (who are basically greedy bastards exploiting Erwin for all he's worth) not to go through with it?

When a strange plague hits Vibora Bay, one of the PCs receives an anonymous e-mail claiming Al's blood contains antibodies that can cure the disease. An attached file seems to prove the truth of the claim. Can the PCs catch Al and convince (or force) him to help? And just who sent that e-mail?

Al has little sense for tactics — he usually gets into fights when he's frightened or angry, and attacks whatever brought on those emotions straightforwardly. But he's a skilled fighter despite his size and limited intelligence, and opponents underestimate him at their peril.

Campaign Use: Al was once a human named Brian Tatosky. Brian was an ordinary, everyday guy — until an unscrupulous scientific organization trying to develop a new "superhuman soldier" program kidnapped him (he fit their genetic profile for experimentation). The scientists incarcerated him in their lab and injected him with a serum derived from alligator genes. Their intention was to make him tougher, stronger, and better adapted to the water (since special ops soldiers spend so much time diving and swimming). It worked... but not the way they planned. Tatosky mutated too far, both his body and his mind becoming far more alligator-like than they had planned. Using his newfound strength, speed, and powers, "Al" broke free and escaped into the Florida swamps. By now he's so thoroughly bestial in body and mind that it may no longer be possible to reverse his transformation.

Al is primarily designed as a sympathetic bad guy — a character who can play the role of the misunderstood monster who only needs to be treated with kindness to reform. Perhaps PCs can get involved in efforts to cure him. You can always use tabloid reporters or cryptozoologists in search of the Alligator Man (or the Skunk Ape, with whom he's often associated) to complicate any plot set in the swamps. And of course, there's the mystery of who created Al in the first place.

It's probably best not to make Al any tougher — his role is not that of combat machine designed to take on the entire PC team, but monster needing help to redeem himself. At most, you might give him some Damage Reduction. To weaken him, reduce his Characteristics to levels more appropriate for your campaign.

Al doesn't have the mentality to Hunt anyone. He angers easily, but once out of sight of whatever infuriated him, tends to quickly forget it... though he may remember someone who hurt or frightened him, should they happen to meet again.

Appearance: Al stands about 6'7" and weighs approximately 350 pounds. His hairless green skin is bumpy and scaly like his namesake, and his fingers and toes have been transformed into long, nasty-looking claws. His face has become longer and developed a reptilian "snout," and his mouth now contains sharp, jagged, uneven teeth that make talking difficult. His eyes have also become reptilian, with long, thin pupils against a yellow sclera. He wears tattered human clothes that fit poorly, which he steals on his trips to civilization.

DEADMAN WALKIN'

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
30	STR	20	15-	Lift 1,600 kg; 6d6 [3]
21	DEX	33	13-	OCV: 7/DCV: 7
25	CON	30	14-	
20	BODY	20	13-	
15	INT	5	12-	PER Roll 12-
20	EGO	20	13-	ECV: 7
25	PRE	15	14-	PRE Attack: 5d6
6	COM	-2	10-	
20	PD	14		Total: 20 PD (20 rPD)
20	ED	15		Total: 20 ED (20 rED)
5	SPD	19		Phases: 3, 5, 8, 10, 12
11	REC	0		
50	END	0		
60	STUN	12		Total Characteristics Cost: 201

Movement: Running: 9"/18"

Cost Powers **END**

30	<i>Rifle:</i> RKA 3d6, Armor Piercing (+½), No Range Modifier (+½); OAF (-1), Beam (-¼), No Knockback (-¼), 8 Charges (-½)	[8]
21	<i>Handgun:</i> RKA 2d6+1, +2 Increased STUN Multiplier (+½); OAF (-1), Beam (-¼), No Knockback (-¼), 2 clips of 12 Charges each (-0)	[12]
14	<i>Bowie Knife:</i> HKA 1d6+1 (2d6+1 with STR), Armor Piercing (+½); OAF (-1), No Knockback (-¼) plus Range Based On STR (+¼) for knife; OAF (-1), Lockout (cannot use HKA at all until Charge is recovered; -½), 1 Recoverable Charge (-1¼)	3
20	<i>Undead Form:</i> Damage Resistance (20 PD/20 ED)	0
60	<i>Undead Form:</i> Physical and Energy Damage Reduction, 50%, Resistant	0
8	<i>Undead Eyes:</i> Sight Group Flash Defense (8 points)	0
8	<i>Undead Ears:</i> Hearing Group Flash Defense (8 points)	0
6	<i>Undead Mind:</i> Mental Defense (10 points total)	0
45	<i>Undead Form:</i> Life Support (Total)	0
6	<i>Swift:</i> Running +3" (9" total)	1
5	<i>Undead Eyes:</i> Nightvision	0
5	<i>Undead Eyes:</i> Infrared Perception (Sight Group)	0
39	<i>Sense Life:</i> Detect Life Force 14- (no Sense Group), Discriminatory, Range, Sense, Targeting, Tracking	0

Skills

20	+4 with Ranged Attacks
3	Climbing 13-
3	Combat Driving 13-
3	Concealment 12-
3	Demolitions 12-
3	Fast Draw (Small Arms) 13-
3	Interrogation 14-
3	SS: Pharmacology/Toxicology 12-
7	Stealth 15-
3	Streetwise 14-

- 4 TF: Common Motorized Ground Vehicles, Two-Wheeled Motorized Ground Vehicles, Helicopters
- 7 WF: Common Melee Weapons, Small Arms, General Purpose/Heavy Machine Guns, Grenade Launchers, Shoulder-Fired Weapons
- 2 Weaponsmith (Firearms) 12-

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 331

Total Cost: 532

200+ Disadvantages

- 20 Hunted: UNTIL 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture/Kill)
- 10 Physical Limitation: susceptible to Necromancy spells and powers (Infrequently, Greatly Impairing)
- 20 Psychological Limitation: Hates Living Beings; Revels In Killing (Common, Total)
- 25 Susceptibility: to holy objects and places, takes 2d6 per Phase he's in contact with them (Common)
- 257 Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 532

Background/History: Darren Williams was once one of the highest-paid assassins in the world. He had an almost-unblemished record, and had never been captured or hurt on the job... until he came to Vibora Bay on a contract to kill a City Councillor and Robert Caliburn put two bullets in his chest.

He “woke up” in the morgue a few days later, amazed to discover that he was alive... only to find out that he wasn't. He was *unlive*, or undead if you prefer, though he had no idea why. Never one to look a gift horse in the mouth, he escaped from the facility, murdering two medical examiners on the way out. Since then he's continued his lucrative career as a killer for hire, though he takes on a lot more superhuman and paranormal targets than he used to.

Personality/Motivation: In life, Darren Williams was greedy, callous, cruel, and sociopathic. In unlife, Deadman Walkin' is all of those things, and more. He has developed an active loathing for anyone living, a hatred of them for their ability to enjoy the simple pleasures he no longer can (eating, sleeping, companionship...). The only joy he gets now is in killing people — and he's always eager to enjoy himself some more.

Quote: “In a second you'll be dead like me... but *you* won't be gettin' back up.”

Powers/Tactics: There's nothing complicated about Deadman Walkin's abilities: he's an undead assassin. His attacks are the weapons he favored in life (rifle, handgun, knife), and his undead state makes him far stronger and tougher than he ever was when he still had to breathe. Thanks to his resilience, he's willing to take foolish risks if he has to, like jumping off tall buildings to escape pursuers. He thinks of himself as indestructible, though he's not.

Deadman Walkin' prefers to strike from surprise whenever he can — all he asks out of unlife is a little unfair advantage, as he likes to say. His

favorite method of taking out a target is sniping, but he can also use explosives, poison, or close combat if he has to. If confronted and forced into open combat, he'll fight at first, but cut and run as soon as things start to go wrong.

As an undead being, Deadman Walkin' is susceptible to spells and powers of a necromantic nature. For example, a spell to control or harm zombies works on him, though he's not strictly a zombie. The GM determines whether his Physical Limitation applies to a particular ability.

Campaign Use: Deadman Walkin' comes with one big background mystery: how did he come back to “life”? Did a mystic raise him from the dead for some reason? Did ambient magical energies, a Necromancy spell gone wrong, or a powerful Voodoo ritual improperly controlled spontaneously cause his resurrection as a free-willed zombie? Do Caliburn's angel-touched bullets have unintended side effects? Was Williams simply too strong-willed to die? The answers to those questions may just lead to more questions, including: will whatever brought him back to unlife make him more powerful over time?

If you want to make Deadman Walkin' more powerful, you can increase his Characteristics (turning him into a sort of brick), or you can give him mystic powers relating to his undead state. Maybe he has a death touch, can project bolts of necromantic energy, or the like. To weaken him, reduce his Characteristics a little and his Damage Reduction to 25%.



DEADMAN WALKIN'
PLOT SEEDS

The Demonologist created (or claims to have created) Deadman Walkin' — and now he wants to “call in the favor” and get D.W. to do a few jobs for him (gratis, of course). Deadman Walkin' agrees to the deal, even though he doesn't believe the Demonologist, because the targets the Demonologist wants taken out are the PCs... and he's agreed to use his spells to make D.W. even tougher until he completes the task!

After being “killed” again in some way (an explosion, a superbattle, or the like), Deadman Walkin' comes back more powerful than ever, this time as a ghost. He's permanently intangible, but able to affect the solid world in many deadly ways. The PCs have to find a way to put him to rest for good.

Deadman Walkin' was working for the Chinese government when he was killed... and he's working for them still, as they subtly manipulate him from afar into doing what they want. The PCs have to uncover this shadowy connection and put a stop to it before D.W.'s ordered to kill an American politician or other sensitive target.

Deadman Walkin' only Hunts people if paid to, or if he wants revenge on them. See Powers/Tactics for a description of how he goes about his “jobs.”

Appearance: If it weren't for the fact that he long ago gave up the ghost, Deadman Walkin' would look like a fit, muscular man. As it is, his skin has the pallor of death, with bluish lips and sunken eyes. Here and there he's stitched up gashes and wounds, since he no longer heals like a living being does. He wears tattered military fatigues and gear... but his weapons (a rifle, a sidearm, and a large knife) are in perfect condition, clean and well-polished, creating an eerie contrast.

MR. GEMINI

Val	Char	Cost	Roll	Notes
15	STR	5	12-	Lift 200 kg; 3d6 [1]
15	DEX	15	12-	OCV: 5/DCV: 5
18	CON	16	13-	
13	BODY	6	12-	
14	INT	4	12-	PER Roll 12-
12	EGO	4	11-	ECV: 4
15	PRE	5	12-	PRE Attack: 3d6
11	COM	1	11-	
8	PD	5		Total: 16 PD (8 rPD)
8	ED	4		Total: 16 ED (8 rED)
4	SPD	15		Phases: 3, 6, 9, 12
7	REC	0		
36	END	0		
30	STUN	0		
Total Characteristics Cost: 80				
Movement: Running: 6"/12"				
Cost Powers END				
280	Gemini Syndrome: Duplication (creates 64 500-point Duplicates), Easy Recombination (Zero Phase Action at full DCV), Ranged Recombination (+½), Rapid Duplication (can create 4 Duplicates per Half Phase Action; +½) 0			
13	Gemini Form: Shape Shift (Sight and Touch Groups, any humanoid form), Costs Endurance Only To Activate (+¼); Extra Time (takes 1 Turn to change form; -¾), Concentration (Mr. Gemini is at ½ DCV while changing form; -½) 2			
50	Gemini Bond: Mind Link (up to 64 Gemini minds at once), No LOS Required 0			
22	Handgun: RKA 2d6+1, Armor Piercing (+½), +1 Increased STUN Multiplier (+¼); OAF (-1), Beam (-¼), No Knockback (-¼), 2 clips of 8 Charges each (-¼) [8]			
16	Armored Clothes: Armor (8 PD/8 ED); OIF (-½) 0			
Perks				
25	Contacts: 25 points' worth, throughout the Vibora Bay underworld			
5	Money: Well Off			
Talents				
9	Lightning Reflexes: +6 DEX to act first with All Attacks			

Skills

10	+1 Overall
3	Acting 12-
3	Combat Driving 12-
3	Conversation 12-
3	Fast Draw (Small Arms) 12-
2	Forgery (Documents) 12-
2	Gambling (Card Games) 12-
3	Lockpicking 12-
3	Mimicry 12-
3	Persuasion 12-
3	Security Systems 12-
3	Shadowing 12-
3	Stealth 12-
7	Streetwise 14-
7	Teamwork 14-
3	WF: Small Arms, Blades

Total Powers & Skills Cost: 481
Total Cost: 561

200+ Disadvantages

10	Distinctive Features: Mutant (Not Concealable; Always Noticed; Detectable Only By Unusual Senses)
20	Hunted: VBPD 8- (Mo Pow, NCI, Capture)
10	Hunted: Black Mask 8- (As Pow, Capture)
15	Psychological Limitation: Greedy (Common, Strong)
15	Social Limitation: Secret Identity (James Nystrom) (Frequently, Major)
20	Vulnerability: 2 x Effect from Drains and Transfers (Common)
271	Experience Points

Total Disadvantage Points: 561

Background/History: Jim Nystrom was a 13 year-old punk kid already well on his way to developing a long criminal record when he discovered his mutant ability to create a duplicate of himself. The “second self” was identical to him in every way... so suddenly, Jim had the perfect alibi. People would identify him as the kid who robbed them, only to have Jim parade in a slew of teachers and fellow students who swore he was in school at the time. It was the perfect racket, and Jim was soon making a lot more money than most kids his age.

As he got older, his powers increased. He became able to create more and more duplicates, finally topping out at 64 of them when he was in his early twenties. But he wasn't stupid about it. He knew his powers gave him a “gimmick” he could use to really make a mark for himself in the underworld — but he also realized that if people knew what he could do, he'd lose a real advantage. So he created the costumed persona of “Mr. Gemini” and revealed his power to create one duplicate.

Since then, Mr. Gemini has become more and more of a force in the Viboran underworld, sometimes working with the Big Picture or Guy Sweetland, but just as often acting independently. The fact that he doesn't seem to want to take any “turf” for himself or set up a permanent gang mollifies Sweetland and Robinson and keeps them from coming after him. But what no one suspects is that

Mr. Gemini's ever-shifting "gang" is him, and him alone... all 65 of him, that is.

Personality/Motivation: Mr. Gemini doesn't nurse any grand schemes of world conquest, or rulership of the underworld, or anything "stupid" like that (as he'd put it). He just wants to get rich and live a life of luxury, and he sees crime as the easiest way to do that. For all his street smarts, it's never occurred to him that he could make even more money using his powers in the Espionage World.

Quote: "Two is better than one, after all."

Powers/Tactics: Mister Gemini is a mutant with the ability to create up to 64 duplicates of himself. He can vary their clothing colors if he wishes (though not the type/style of clothing worn); additionally, the Duplicates do not have his Money. He can manifest up to eight duplicates per second, if that's all he chooses to do. Even more interesting, Mr. Gemini and all of his Duplicates can alter their appearance. This takes time and effort, but it allows him to make it look as if he's a gang rather than one replicatable mutant. He can't copy other peoples' appearance (much to his annoyance), but his Shape Shift still provides him with a tremendous asset in his criminal career.

Mister Gemini prefers not to fight unless he has a clear advantage over his opponents. He'd rather run away and live to fight (or take revenge) another day. But if push comes to shove, 65 men, each armed with a powerful handgun and skilled

at Coordinating their attacks, is a pretty effective private army. He'll split his "gang" up into groups of three to six and have them Coordinate on different targets.

Mister Gemini goes to a lot of trouble to make people think he can only create one duplicate of himself. He won't use his Duplication to create more than one Duplicate when others can see him do it unless he *absolutely* has to.

Campaign Use: Mister Gemini is a supervillain best suited for lower-powered heroes to fight. He's not much use in a campaign against powerful heroes unless you want to have him working on all sorts of conspiratorial criminal plots behind the scenes — even with 64 of him, he can't put up much of a fight. On the other hand, as the secret power behind the Sovereign Sons (see page 87)... and who knows what else... he could swiftly become a major underworld player.

To make Mr. Gemini more powerful, add the *Imitation* and/or *Cellular Adders* to his Shape Shift. You could also improve his ability to attack by giving him some super-tech weapons (perhaps ones he stole from ARGENT, or hired Wayland Talos to make for him). To weaken him, reduce his number of Duplicates to 16.

Mister Gemini rarely Hunts anyone; it's not worth the risk. If he decided it was, he'd use his Duplicates to bedevil his quarry (perhaps even trying to convince him he's going insane) before moving in for the kill.

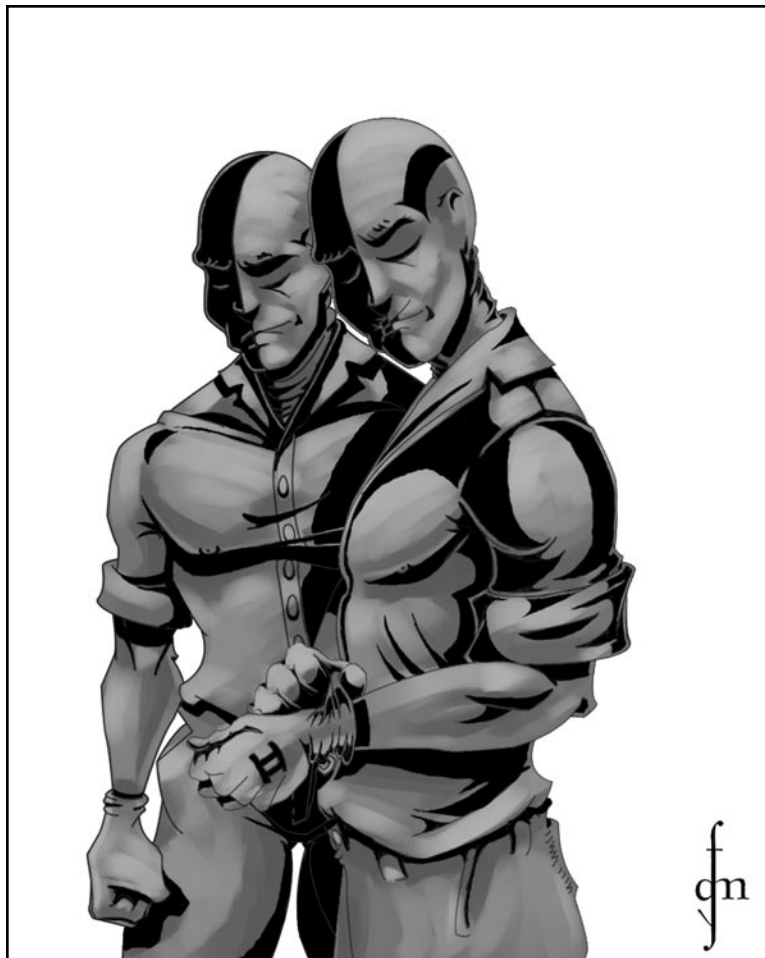
Appearance: Mister Gemini wears a full face mask, split evenly down the middle: the right half is brown, the left half a dull gold. (When he creates his "second self," he sometimes arranges things so he has a totally gold mask, and his Duplicate a totally brown one.) Neither half has eyeholes (there are slightly shadowed areas where the eyes are), though he seems to have no trouble seeing. He typically wears a man's button-down shirt and man's pants and shoes — nice clothes, but not hand-tailored or really expensive ones. Sometimes he adds a tie, but not often (if he wears one, he uses a tie-tack depicting the astrological symbol for Gemini to keep it from moving around). He usually rolls up his shirtsleeves and wears gloves; on the back of the gloves is embroidered the astrological symbol for Gemini.

MR. GEMINI PLOT SEEDS

Mister Gemini's "second self" has been kidnapped, and he has absolutely no leads. Desperately afraid his "brother" will be killed, he approaches the PCs. He offers to turn state's evidence and testify against whoever they want him to if they'll just return his second self to him unharmed.

It turns out Mr. Gemini is *not* a mutant. His powers are the result of a spell placed on his family over a century ago... but somehow the spell has gone awry, causing his Duplicates to manifest as hideous monsters rather than exact copies of him. His "monster army" goes on a rampage... and of course they're strangely intelligent and tactically coordinated for "mindless monsters." The PCs have to stop the rampage, figure out what's going on, and put the spell to rights.

A "gang war" breaks out between Mr. Gemini and Guy Sweetland. The PCs have to put a stop to it before more innocent people are gunned down in the crossfire.



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VIBORA BAY INDEX

- 22nd Avenue Playas.....86
 ABC Cabs33
 ACI Building26, 49
 ACI Forum26-27, 37
 Adair Network34
 Adams-Onis Treaty10
 Advanced Concept Industries (ACI)49
 Advanced Research Laboratory.....59
 Agriculture and Aquaculture ...51
 Aikens, Captain Dean129
 Airport/Business Park (neighborhood)23
 Airports23, 33
 Al, the Alligator Man.....148
 Alger, Broer, and Cole96
 Ali, Pvt. Ahmet.....71
 Alligators20
 American Light Arms50
 American Revolution.....10
 Amnesia137
 Amphibian.....69, 72, 121
 Anderson, K. P.52
 Animals, local.....20-21
 Answer, the88
 Architecture32
 Arellan, Don Tristan de Luna y .8
 Arena, the43, 118
 ARGENT90, 132
 Around the City.....23
 Art galleries38
 Aspenwall, Captain Shirley58
 Atawater (neighborhood).....23
 Atlantic Carrier Group58
 Atlantis.....48
 Aunt Nancy61, 99, 135
 Ayoob, Esteban.....51
 Backstory of Vibora Bay102
 Bailey, Hal.....11
 Bancroft, Dante39, 117
 Barker.....114
 Barker, Mayor Richenda ...16, 29, 64
 Baron, the.....87, 124
 Barracudas, the (UNTIL squad) .70
 Bars38
 Baseball37
 Basketball.....37
 Batchco52
 Bay County Correctional Facility.....68
 Bay County International Airport.....28
 Beaches32
 Becker, Walt35
 Bellar, Samara.....85
 Bellochio52
 Bibliography154
 Big Picture16, 86, 123
 Birds, local20-21
 Black Candle Books34
 Black Mask X.....40, 118
 Black Paladin.....88
 Blackman's Square24
 Blalock, Sheri.....70
 Bloodstone105, 107
 Blue Diamond Farms52
 Blue Freight50
 Blue Marlin Grill.....25
 Blueblood, Bobby.....61
 Bocchieri, Marcello86, 123
 Bodden, SAC Bill68
 Bolding, Jeff54
 Bondi, Flavio12, 15, 123
 Bonilla, Tom34
 Booms and Crashes: 1900-1937.12
 Bootlegging48
 Bourne, Charles43
 Bowlegs, Chief Billy.....11
 British settlers9-10
 Brother Thunder75, 121
 Bruce (suburb)28
 Buford, Chief Of Police Thomas65-66
 Bunker (suburb)28
 Bunker Fountain.....26
 Buoniconte, Don Guiseppa12
 Burgard Books34
 Burnham, Major Roderick11
 Buses.....33
 Business World.....48
 BusiNest129
 Bynham, Jeremiah97, 135
 Café el Chupacabra53
 Caffrey Air Force Base...28, 58, 120
 Caliburn, Robert103-07
 Calloway, Bertram85
 Camping, Hiking, and More! ...96
 Cape Canaveral15
 Capital punishment.....68
 Captain Orbit15
 Carlisle, Vicki97
 Carr family41
 Carvalho, Pvt. Juan71
 Castro, Fidel15
 Catalina (neighborhood).....23
 Cauldron139
 Chamberlain120
 Chamberlain, Police Commissioner Rebecca64-65
 Choctawhatchee Bay ...11, 58, 111
 Choctawhatchee Long Term Ecological Research Center....71
 Choice, the103
 Chu, Marty100
 Chu, Tuan100
 Cirque Sinister88-89, 136
 City Council29-30
 City Detention Facility.....68
 City Government.....29
 City Hall (neighborhood).....26
 City Officials.....30
 Civil protest.....14-15
 Civil War11
 Civilian Conservation Corps ...14
 Clark Robinson85
 Climate.....18
 Cluet Farms (neighborhood) ...26
 Cluet, Henry10
 Cobras, the86
 Colby, Franklin.....92
 Coligny, Major Jeanne.....70
 Colleges.....34
 Colonization.....8
 Compound, the89
 Controller29
 Convocation, the61-62
 Cooper, Capstick, and Rand.....51
 Cooper, Norman35
 Copycat15
 Corruption, police120
 Costumed Criminals.....89
 County Officials.....30
 Crabtree Building96, 135
 Crabtree Café97
 Crabtree, Elias96
 Creek Indians8-11
 Crocodiles.....20
 Cruz, Marty "the Monster"53
 Cuban refugees15
 Cult of the Shadow Flame106-07
 Cypress Grove Park (neighborhood)23
 Dade, Major Francis10
 Daily life.....32
 Dark Champions, Vibora Bay as setting for.....110
 Dark Saints62, 120
 Davis, Alexander54
 Davis, Eria.....40
 De Funiak Springs (nearby city) .28
 De Soto, Hernando8
 DEA69
 Deadman Walkin'150
 Death penalty.....68
 Deer.....21
 Defenders of Justice45
 DeLaCruz, Armando.....54
 Delphinus Shipping Lines50
 DEMON61, 90, 130
 Denardi, Guillermo129
 Depression13
 Descheppes, Pvt. Yvette.....71
 Destin (nearby city).....28
 Dew Chemical Company51
 Diario37
 Dirty, Poorly-Lit Place For Books, A53, 119
 Divisions of the VBPD.....65
 Doctor Fang13
 Doctor Ka44, 118
 Doctor Oracle15
 Doctor Scarab45
 Doctor Twilight45
 Dogz, the88
 Donelson, Captain Cassie.....129
 Dorsett, Victor.....70
 Drake-Victoria, Inc.....50
 Dreggs, Colton86
 Duality, as setting theme110
 Dubois Slavery and Civil Rights Museum.....25
 Duchess Industries51
 Dunston, Regina67
 Dupuy, Jean-Claude85, 122
 Duval Modern Art Museum38
 Duval Street (neighborhood)....26
 Duvall, Latish Anne and descendants60-61
 Easton.....26
 Easton Shore (neighborhood) ..26
 Elemental Gems.....105
 Elevation19
 Emergency Services30
 Enigma, the.....15
 Ennis, Gwendolyn (City Councillor)30
 Entertainment.....37
 Esher, Peter10
 Esper88
 Executions68
 Faerie45
 Fantasy Hero, Vibora Bay as setting for110
 Far Easton (neighborhood).....26
 Far Weston (neighborhood).....23
 Faraday Community College ...34
 FBI68
 Featherstone, Hyrum34
 Federal Law Enforcement.....68
 Financial District (neighborhood)26
 Financial World51
 First Harbor Security126
 Fish, local21
 Fitzarthur Publishing.....51
 Flagler, Henry.....12
 Flint, Vic.....14
 Flora and fauna, local.....20
 Flow142
 Flowers, local20
 Fontaine, Monique ...50, 119, 126
 Football37
 Fort Orozco/Blenkhorn8-9
 Forum, the (neighborhood)26
 Frances, Hurricane16
 Freeman, Robert "Happy Bob" ..52
 Freeport (suburb)28
 Freeways33
 French settlers8-10
 Frich, Kurt12
 Fromisher, Zelia95, 134
 Gabriel95
 Gabriel's Alley95, 134
 Galloway, Kimberly and Julius94, 134
 Gamemastering.....102-11
 Garage, the53
 Garrity, Janet97, 135
 Geology19
 George, Bailey51
 Get 'Em, Inc.51

- Getting Around.....33
 Gjelsten, Hobart.....70
 GM's Vault.....111
 Golden Age.....14
 Goldenrod Beach.....8
 Goldmann, City Engineer
 Arthur.....30
 Golf.....37
 Gonzalo, Augie.....83
 Government.....29
 Grabble, Dale.....51
 Grady, Stanton, and Hartley.....51
 Grayton Beach (suburb).....27
 Great Baldini.....13
 Gulf Breeze (nearby city).....28
 Gulf of Mexico.....18
 Guy's Lounge.....100
 Hammerhead Stadium.....23
 Hand, William.....11, 32
 Happy Bob's Pawnshop
 and Loan.....52, 119
 Harrigan, Lt. Samuel.....67
 Haynesville Project.....13-14
 Healy, Captain Jonathan.....58
 Heaven and Hell, the War
 between.....102-09
 Hellums, Captain Clyde.....128
 Hendrikson family.....52
 The Hidden magazine.....51
 High Apostolic
 Church.....28, 32, 58, 120
 High Street.....9-10, 25
 History.....7-16
 Hockey.....37
 Hollings Hills (neighborhood).....24
 Holmes, Bobby.....146
 Hornet.....88
 Hot Spots For Cool Heroes.....91
 Howard, Leticia
 (City Attorney).....30, 114
 Hsu Haixia.....54
 Humidity.....18
 Hurricane Harry's (club).....38
 Hurricanes.....16, 18-19
 Imperial Posse, the.....86
 Indians.....8-11
 Industrial and Manufacturing.....50
 Inner Easton (neighborhood).....27
 Inner Weston (neighborhood).....24
 Institute for Human
 Advancement.....43
 International Microchip.....49
 Introduction.....4
 Iron Father.....13
 Ivan, Hurricane.....16
 Jackson, Andrew.....10
 Jakusovszky and Jakusovszky.....97
 Jamison, Earl.....29, 93
 Jefferson, Jason "JJ".....50
 Jetstream.....69
 Joe Hardy Stadium.....37
 Jones, "Blackjack" Israel.....48, 98
 Jones, Bonobo.....52
 Jones, Prof. Jacques Bergier.....61
 Jumble, the (neighborhood).....24
 Juryrig.....81, 122
 Kearse, Howie.....35
 Kerathios.....117
 Kirkham Tower.....129
 Koshiro Hansen.....54
 Kosuge Sadako.....54
 Krames, Dr. Nathan.....50
 Krames, Warbaby.....53
 Kramm, Randall.....48
 Krot, James.....37
 Ku Klux Klan.....14
 Kwan, Susan (City Councillor).....30
 L'Institut Thoth.....43
 Labat, Sofia.....48
 Lafler, Andre.....92
 Latin American Industries
 (LAI).....51
 Law Enforcement.....64
 Le Gravier (club).....38
 Leech.....88
 Legal and Financial Services.....51
 Legal World.....51
 Legion of Evil.....13
 Life in Vibora Bay.....32
 Lindsley Arms.....12
 Lisuen, Fra. Mariano.....9
 Little India (neighborhood).....26
 Little Paris (neighborhood).....38
 Local flora and fauna.....20
 Longshoremen's Union.....26
 Lucas, Benjamin.....67, 121
 MacKenzie Square.....24
 Mafia.....12, 15
 Magic.....32
 Mahogany Club.....92, 133
 Mammoth.....15
 Maps.....24, 27
 Marcoux, Clinton.....129
 Marielito Boatlift.....15
 MARS Team.....67, 121
 Martial World.....53
 Martinez, Sean.....40
 Marty's Place.....100
 Matthews, Gilbert.....118
 Max Pendragon.....13-14, 111
 Maynard, Captain Robert.....58-59
 Mayor.....29
 McClellan Toy Museum.....27
 McCombs, Eric.....129
 McHale, Lance Cpl. Charlene.....71
 Media.....34
 Merlin's magazine.....51
 Midkiff, Vincent
 (City Councillor).....30, 114
 Midtown (neighborhood).....24
 Military World.....57
 Mills, Hope.....52
 Minefield, the (club).....39, 115
 Minimax.....144
 Mission de San Paolo.....8
 Mister Gemini.....89, 124, 152
 Miyajima Yoshio.....54
 Molly Moppet style.....52
 Money Kings.....86, 123
 Moore, H. T.....14
 Moors, Cecil.....93
 Moreau, Dr. Phillippe.....115
 Morningstar.....88
 Mundane Crime.....85
 Museums.....38
 Mystic
 World...32-33, 44, 48, 95-96, 106
 Mysticism.....32
 NAACP.....14
 Nar-Cola Open.....37
 NASA.....15, 50
 Naval Station Vibora Bay.....12, 58
 New Dawn Church.....132
 New Shadows.....86
 Newspapers.....35
 Nicotine the dragon.....107
 Nightclubs.....38
 Nightshade, Cassandra.....96
 Northrup, Victor.....97
 O'Guinn, Assistant Chief
 Michael.....65, 120
 Ocean Optical.....50
 Oil, Chemicals, and Medical
 Technology.....51
 Old Town.....26
 Oldcorne (neighborhood).....27
 Oldcorne, John.....11
 Olmacher, Courtney.....86, 123
 Opal, Hurricane.....16
 Order of the Guardians.....121
 Organization.....29
 Organized crime.....12, 15-16, 85, 123
 Orozco, Don Juan de.....8
 Osceola.....10
 Osiris.....45
 Outcasts, the.....15
 Pan-yong Park.....54
 Panama City (nearby city).....28
 Panama City Beach
 (nearby city).....28
 Panama City News Herald.....37
 Panthers.....21
 Paris, John.....16, 64-66, 120
 Pendragon, Max.....13-14, 111
 Perrault, Papa.....48
 Peterson, Naomi and Buck.....49
 Petrocelli, Big Mike.....40
 Pharos Industries.....50
 Pierre Street Community
 Center.....24, 81
 Pilar, Jaime.....8-9
 Plantation, the (Demonhame).....130
 Plants, local.....20
 Pogozelski, Mark.....41
 Poison Pen.....89
 Police.....64-84
 Ponce de Leon, Juan.....8
 Population of Vibora Bay.....8
 Prehistory.....8, 111
 PRIMUS.....69
 Prisons.....68
 Prohibition.....12
 Pulp Era.....12-14
 Pulp Hero, Vibora Bay as
 setting for.....110
 Radio.....35
 Raeder, Director Of
 Emergency Services John.....30
 Railroads.....12
 Rainfall.....18
 Ram.....39, 115
 Reconstruction Period.....11
 Red Nest.....129
 Redsnake.....54, 119
 Religion.....32
 Religious World.....28, 32, 58
 Rensaleer, Arlen.....26
 Revolutionary War.....10
 Rhiems family.....51
 Robinson, Clark.....16, 123, 130
 Rock Hill (suburb).....28
 Rohde, Gelil.....38
 Roosevelt, Franklin.....14
 Rosemary Beach (suburb).....12, 28
 RSvKG.....14
 Ruggiero, Luis
 (City Councillor).....30
 Rutledge, Steven.....65-66
 Sabo, Chief Medical Examiner Dr.
 Paul.....30, 114
 Saints of the High Apostolic
 Church.....60, 62
 Salt.....131
 San Sebastien Swamp.....21, 111
 Sanchez, Salvador "the Nose".....48
 Scattergood, Maximillian.....121
 Schumacher, Douglas.....70
 Schurtz, Major General
 Langdon.....59
 Scontras, Sgt. Glenn.....70
 Sea King.....73
 Seagrove (suburb).....10, 12, 28
 Seasons.....18
 Secret history of Vibora Bay.....102
 Seeker action figures.....50
 Seguidores.....54
 Selkirk, Elijah.....54
 Seminole Hills
 (region/suburb).....19, 28
 Seminoles.....10-11
 Semmes, Captain Rafael.....11, 48
 Sergeant Serpent.....89
 Serpentine.....45
 Serpents.....20
 Set.....45
 Seven Years' War.....9
 Shadow Tower.....86
 Shadows, the.....15-16, 86
 Shattuck, Michael.....132
 Sherman, General William.....11
 Shipping and Transportation.....49
 Sievers, Captain John.....70
 Signature (club).....38
 Silver Age.....15
 Sinclair University.....26, 34
 Sister Rain.....78, 121
 Sixth Chakra.....95, 134
 Skunk Ape, the.....22, 112
 Slavery.....9-11
 Smith, Maxwell.....50

- Snakes.....20
 Sneak, the.....89
 Southern Agriculture, LLC.....52
 Southern Chemical.....49
 Sovereign Sons..... 69, 87, 124
 Space exploration15
 Spaniards8-10
 Speed Demon.....15
 Sports37
 Spring break28, 34
 St. Andrews Marina.....28
 Stairs, Cpl. Curtis71
 Stano, Silver Avenger
 Barton69-70
 Star Hero, Vibora Bay
 as setting for 111
 Sterling, Malcolm..... 93, 134
 Sterling Manor 93, 134
 Sticks, the 130
 Stingray74
 Stonewall, LLC52
 Storms18-19
 Stott, Pvt. Henry.....71
 Street Gangs87
 Streetcars.....33
 Suburbs27
 Supercriminal organizations89
 Superhuman World.....40, 88
 SWAT67
 Sweetland, Guy and family
 15-16, 26, 85, 99, 120-23, 136
 Sweetland's Restaurant..... 99, 136
 Sykes, AAIC Maureen70
 Symphony38
 Tangles, the
 (neighborhood) 26, 115
 Taxis33
 Taylor, Zachary10
 Tejada College.....34
 Television34
 Temperature18
 Tempest.....18, 70
 Tennis.....37
 Therakiel 102
 Therakiel, the Halfway Angel .. 108
 Titus.....85
 Tolochkova, Madam Laika33
 Toshikami Japanese Gardens
 and Museum38
 Totenkopf, der13
 Tourism.....32
 Trader Jack..... 89, 124
 Transnational Container.....50
 Trees, local20
 Trey Kings.....88
 Tribal Arts.....52
 Trinquier, John Brown61
 Trismegistus Council 121
 Tropical storms18-19
 Tubman's Tunnel..... 129
 UFOs28, 59, 95
 Underworld.....85
 Union Station (neighborhood) .. 25
 Union Station Railroad
 Museum.....38
 Universities.....34
 University of Florida Vibora
 Bay.....24, 34
 UNTIL70
 USBank51
 USCG Vibora Bay.....57
 Valerian Scarlet 115
 Van da Larr, Philip..... 67, 121
 Vargas, Cesare43
 VB Mob.....87
 VB View37
 Vergari, Domingo54
 Vibora Bay Banner 34, 115
 Vibora Bay Baptist Theological
 Seminary.....34
 Vibora Bay Barracudas37
 Vibora Bay Campaigns 110
 Vibora Bay Copperheads..... 367
 Vibora Bay Credit Union.....51
 Vibora Bay Culinary Institute...34
 Vibora Bay Hammerheads37
 Vibora Bay Hurricane37
 Vibora Bay International
 Airport.....23, 33
 Vibora Bay Ledger35
 Vibora Bay Maritime Museum .38
 Vibora Bay Museum of Art.....38
 Vibora Bay Police Department .. 64
 Vibora Bay Symphony
 Orchestra38
 Vibora Bay Tennis Center ..27, 37
 Vibora Bay Zoo.....26
 Vibora Carmesi..... 54, 56, 119
 Vibora Petroleum51
 Vijaya.....26
 Villains136-53
 Villains (store)..... 52, 119
 VIPER89, 124-30
 Voltaire.....26
 VonWalt, Roy and Alan.....50
 Voodoo75-81, 131
 VTransit49-50, 126
 Walton Bayview
 (neighborhood)27
 Walton Palms Park
 (neighborhood)27
 Walton Work Camp.....68
 War between Heaven and
 Hell102-09
 Ward family.....41
 Wards, political29
 Warehouse, the (VIPER Nest) 125
 Warnke, Milton92
 Warren, Fuller14
 Warwick, Dr. Edward 51, 119
 Waterfront, the
 (neighborhood)26
 Wegner, Frank.....35
 Weston23
 Weston Mob86
 Weston Post.....37
 Weston Shore (neighborhood) .25
 Weston Shore Fish Market38
 Weston Shore Fish Market25
 White Hare Hotel 12, 98, 135
 White Warlocks.....88
 Whitman, Charles and Audrey132
 Whitman's Warehouse (Demon-
 hame) 132
 Wicks, Curtis.....97
 Windsong Mall26
 Work Progress Administration.14
 World Meteorological Organization
 (WMO)18, 70
 World War II14
 Wu, Tony and family50, 61
 Ying Jizhong54
 Zephyr88
 Zoo26



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